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The Past, Present, and Future of the City

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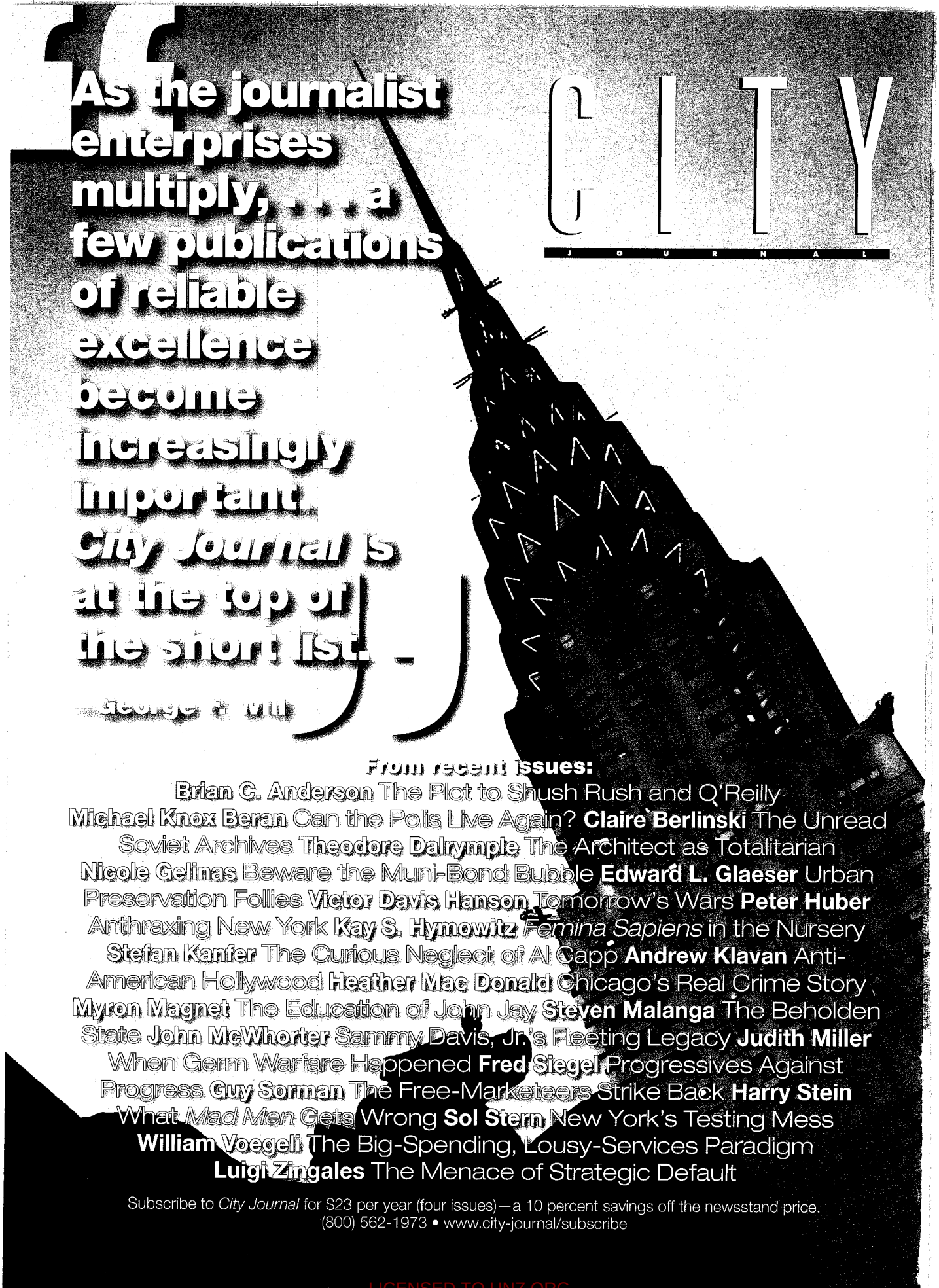

"As the journalist enterprises multiply, . . . a few publications of reliable excellence become increasingly important. *City Journal* is at the top of the short list."

—George F. Will

CITY JOURNAL

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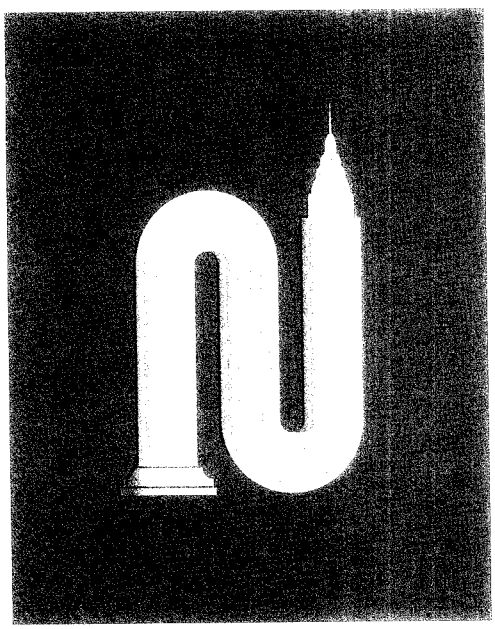
CITY
JOURNAL
Published by the Manhattan Institute
Autumn 2010 Volume 20, Number 4



Cover illustration by the Heads of State, a design firm run by Jason Kernevich and Dustin Summers. Kernevich and Summers are graduates of the Tyler School of Art and have won awards from *Communication Arts*, *American Illustration*, *Print*, *Graphis*, and the Society of Illustrators. Their clients include the bands R.E.M. and Wilco and the *New York Times*.

City Journal (ISSN 1060-8540) is published four times a year by the Manhattan Institute, 52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017. Telephone: (212) 599-7000. Fax: (212) 599-0371. E-mail: letters@city-journal.org. Postmaster: Send address changes to: *City Journal* Subscription Department, P.O. Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834-8975. Subscription rates: one year: $23; two years: $42; foreign subscriptions subject to $8-per-year postage surcharge; back issues: $8 (ten or more, $7 each). Distributed in the United States by Hudson News Company, 1305 Paterson Plank Road, North Bergen, NJ 07047, (201) 867-3600; Ingram Periodicals, 18 Ingram Boulevard, La Vergne, TN 37086, (615) 793-5522; Ubiquity Distributors, 607 DeGraw Street, Brooklyn, NY 11217, (718) 875-5491.

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In Prospect

Twenty years ago, the Manhattan Institute launched *City Journal* as an intellectual and journalistic response to New York City's downward spiral and to the illness of the American city generally. Most observers believed that illness fatal; *City Journal* did not.

Several things, the magazine argued, were killing cities. The first and most pressing was crime. Recall New York in 1990, a city of fear. More than six people a day lost their lives to violence. Along with those 2,262 murders—an all-time high—came rape, assault, burglary, auto theft, and other crimes. Some inner-city neighborhoods were like war zones, with nightly drive-by shootings and police nowhere to be seen. New Yorkers grew accustomed to barring their windows, triple-locking their doors, and looking nervously over their shoulders. The same was true of residents of most other American cities.

Disorder was equally pervasive. In New York, aggressive panhandlers shook down pedestrians on corner after corner; parks were homeless encampments; graffiti scrawled its ugliness over everything. And nothing could be done about any of this urban pathology, the experts said, short of some kind of radical transformation of American life: the crime and disorder were understandable responses to an uncaring, selfish society.

Yet "uncaring" was a wildly implausible charge. In fact, American cities were being harmed by a hypertrophy of care. Since the sixties, most cities had become vast welfare agencies, providing cradle-to-grave services to the poor. Instead of helping the poor get ahead, however, the municipal welfare state caged them in dependency. By the nineties, welfare rolls had expanded dramatically, reaching more than 1 million in New York City.

To help pay for these services, taxes skyrocketed, harming urban economies already challenged by the postindustrial era. Businesses fled, as did many residents. Cities increasingly became handout-seeking wards of the federal government.

Declining schools were another big problem. New York City's schools had once been excellent, helping generations of immigrants assimilate into their new country. By the time *City Journal*'s first issue appeared, though, many schools in New York and other cities were bureaucratic failures, dominated by trendy but unproved pedagogy, ineffective teachers impossible to fire, and student brutality. Minority kids suffered the most, dropping out in droves, their futures lost, while teachers' unions resisted reform.

Small wonder so many people gave up on cities and left for the suburbs. But *City Journal* rejected the idea that the urban crisis was inevitable. Change the policies, and cities could thrive. After all, as Jane Jacobs and other urbanists had shown, cities had been the primary source of economic growth and cultural dynamism throughout American—and world—history. They could be so again.

And in New York, it happened. During the 1990s, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani implemented many ideas championed by *City Journal*, later saying that if there were "a charge of plagiarism for political programs, I'd probably be in a lot of trouble because I think we plagiarized most of them, if not all of them, from the pages of *City Journal*." On the crime front, the magazine was an early advocate of George Kelling and James Q. Wilson's Broken Windows theory, which holds that if a city lets beggars, hookers, and pushers conquer public space, graver crime will follow, since the authorities are sending a message that no one is in charge. Crack down on quality-of-life infractions, and potential wrongdoers hear the opposite message: that someone is watching. After Giuliani and his first police chief, William Bratton, adopted this approach and combined it with key managerial and accountability reforms, crime began to plummet, with murders down 56 percent in six years and all felony crimes dropping even more.

Giuliani introduced welfare reform, too—cutting the welfare rolls from 1.1 million when he took office to 462,000 when he left—and he began to make the city more business-friendly, among other changes that *City Journal* had long promoted. The result was one of the greatest public policy successes of our times: the rebirth of Gotham.

The city has maintained these Giuliani-era policy changes under Mayor Michael Bloomberg and his top cop, Ray Kelly, who has driven crime to historic lows. And as *City Journal* has documented over the years,

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other cities that eventually adopted similar policies, like Los Angeles during the 2000s—where Bratton brought his crime-fighting expertise after leaving New York—saw gains as well. People again began to want to live and work in cities, to experience the excitement, the cultural vitality, and the sense of economic and existential possibility that urban life at its best can convey.

The revolution in urbanism remains unfinished—city schools, in particular, are a dark spot—and always threatened with reversal, as this special anniversary issue, "The Past, Present, and Future of the City," reports. Many American cities never embraced the reforms that saved New York, and they fell deeper into crisis. Detroit and Newark are prime examples, former powerhouses reduced to hollowed-out shells by crime, fleeing populations, and economic collapse. But at last, Steven Malanga observes in "The Next Wave of Urban Reform" (page 14), these troubled cities have leaders—former NBA star Dave Bing and Cory Booker, respectively—pursuing solutions at home instead of shaking a tin cup in Washington. Both are working to open their cities to investment; both recognize the importance of smart policing.

In "The Sidewalks of San Francisco" (page 43), Heather Mac Donald wonders whether the City by the Bay—a locale blessed with great weather, beautiful architecture, and a high standard of living—will reclaim public space from the thuggish street punks, enabled by homelessness advocates, who make life miserable for small businesses and pedestrians. Much will depend on the fate of a November ballot measure that lets police keep people from obstructing sidewalks.

New Orleans was another city battling high crime and economic decline when Hurricane Katrina flooded it. But instead of defeating the city, Nicole Gelinas argues in "Big Easy Rising" (page 56), the shock of Katrina led to a renaissance in citizen initiative, with engaged residents keeping a watchful eye on politicians, making sure that they used recovery funds to rebuild and improve things. New Orleans has regained more than 80 percent of its pre-storm population, and its economy now outpaces the nation's. As Gelinas notes, the Big Easy is teaching the rest of the country, still staggered by the financial and economic crisis, how to do recovery right.

Since our first issue, *City Journal* has held that cities can and should be the drivers of economic growth, so it's fitting that a package of stories in this issue offers a cutting-edge assessment of the economy of cities. The nation's leading urban economist, Edward Glaeser, describes in "Start-Up City" (page 26) how entrepreneurs built New York—and how they're the keys to its successful future. Mario Polèse's "Why Big Cities Matter More than Ever" (page 36) explains the seven reasons that "urban agglomerations" will be the new millennium's engines of prosperity. And Brandon Fuller and Paul Romer show on page 40 how "Cities from Scratch"—newly built metropolises, operating under special charters—can provide a promising new path for development.

City Journal has always had a broad sense of urbanism—one of our earliest issues featured V. S. Naipaul's "Our Universal Civilization," a moving defense of the genius of the West—and the reader will find plenty here exploring the culture of city life, from André Glucksmann's "The Original Birth of Freedom" (page 118), on what we owe ancient Athens, to Claire Berlinski's "Weimar Istanbul" (page 92), a chilling look at a city verging on political catastrophe, to Myron Magnet's "How American Press Freedom Began on Wall Street" (page 134), recounting a 1735 libel trial whose outcome has resonated ever since, to Theodore Dalrymple's account of Britain's rediscovery of its architectural heritage (page 152), to Andrew Klavan's "The Windows," our first piece of original fiction (page 66).

There's much more in the issue, but let me close with thanks to the readers who have made the first two decades of *City Journal* so memorable, including the millions visiting our website, www.city-journal.org, every year. We'd like to think that the next 20 years will be a time when the twenty-first-century city comes into its own as a place where freedom flourishes, crime is low, commerce and culture blossom, and all families can send their kids to good schools—and that the ideas developed in *City Journal* will help bring about that future.

—Brian C. Anderson

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Soundings

Upstate: Rage or Resignation?

North and west of the city, New Yorkers are fed up.

Fred Siegel

Politically, much of upstate New York has teetered between rage and resignation for years. Begin with the rage: upstate New Yorkers are far likelier than Gothamites to agree with Tea Party supporters across the country in viewing the federal government as a threat to their interests, and they take an even harsher view of their own state government. Nationally, most Tea Partiers look favorably on their state governments, but upstaters often consider Albany a semi-criminal enterprise run out of Manhattan. No wonder: the state's executive-level leadership—its governor, lieutenant governor, and attorney general—all hail from the New York City metro area, while upstate New York contains nine of the ten counties in America paying the highest property taxes as a percentage of home values, thanks partly to the fact that Albany requires counties to pay for a portion of Medicaid.

Upstate's sense of betrayal is reflected in the extraordinary support that Buffalo's angry Carl Paladino received in winning the GOP gubernatorial primary. Paladino, who had to petition his way onto the ballot, trounced the Republican designee, Rick Lazio, with nearly two-thirds of the vote in a contest that drew twice the Republican turnout of 2006. In the words of one Tea Partier I talked with, "Carl speaks my rage." But in local races for seats in the New York State Assembly, voters seem more resigned to a future in which the big-spending New York City delegation, dominated by the public-sector unions, maintains its stranglehold on the assembly. Even in what looks like a GOP year nationally, just recruiting Republican candidates to run for the assembly has proved arduous.

The upstaters whom Ed Koch famously referred to as "hicks" before he ran unsuccessfully for governor in 1982 are the heirs of proud traditions. In the mid-nineteenth century, these "hicks" seeded both the feminist and the abolitionist movements. In the late nineteenth century, upstate New York, then the manufacturing heart of America, gave birth to the Chautauqua movement for adult education, which spread across the country. Much as today's Tea Partiers hold discussions about constitutional government, the Chautauquas organized popular but elevated debates on the pressing issues of the day. President Theodore Roosevelt described them as "the most American thing in America."

But with the 1959 completion of the Saint Lawrence Seaway, which undercut Buffalo's historical role as a transportation hub between the Atlantic Ocean and the Midwest, and the decline into obsolescence of most of the area's manufacturing, the upstate region entered a downturn that has only deepened over the years. In Western New York, for example, one of the few growth industries (aside from government jobs in health and education) is economic development agencies, also funded by the state and federal governments. Buffalo, where one-fifth of the housing is abandoned, is among the per-capita national leaders in federal community-development block grants. A bemused Canadian official from thriving Niagara Falls, Ontario, who spends a good deal of time across the river in insolvent Niagara Falls, New York, observed to *Governing*: "I sometimes get the feeling that the state plan for economic development in the region is to employ people as economic developers."

A patch of another upstate region, the Southern Tier, resembles Appalachia in its poverty. The area between the Catskills and Binghamton, itself an asphalt ghost town, is filled with broken-down towns inhabited by worn-down people. There is a potential bright spot: the Southern Tier, like northern Pennsylvania, sits atop the Marcellus Shale, a vast source of natural gas. While there are important environmental issues to consider in opening the area for exploration—such as preserving the New York City watershed—New York has initiated no development so far, and environmentalists seem determined not to allow any. Meanwhile, west of Binghamton and on the Pennsylvania side of the border, a natural-gas boom is going on.

New York's next governor will face the task of reconciling the estrangement between coastal and midwestern New York. When I asked a well-educated upstate friend what he thought

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upstate should do if Andrew Cuomo—who plans to revive the region by rearranging its economic development agencies—wins the governor's race, he replied, only half-jokingly: "We have to secede." Here is the one area in which New York already leads the country: its residents, seceding on their own, have made it Number One in outmigration among the states. Or to use another word, they are resigning as New Yorkers.

An Innovator in Every Apartment

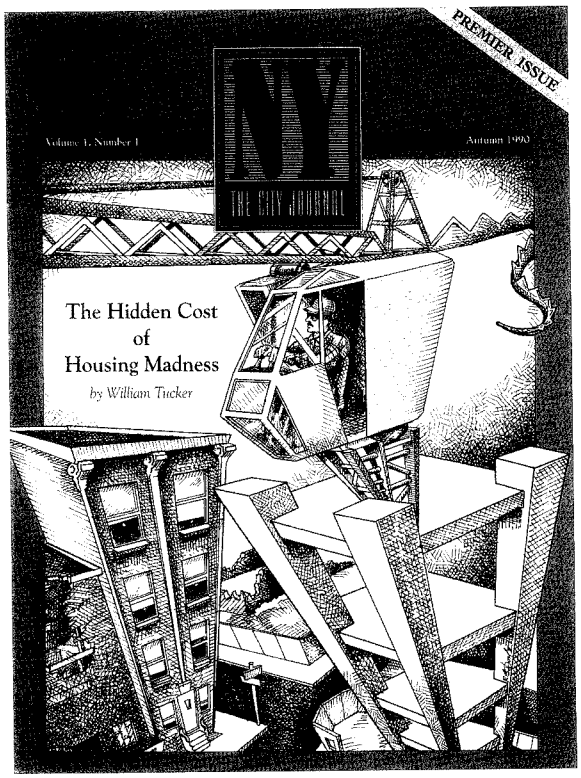
Cities should unravel their pre-digital regulations.

Conor Friedersdorf

In late August, a news item out of Philadelphia rippled across the Web: the city's bloggers were being hit with a $300 tax. Outrage issued from America's keyboards, though the initial report proved somewhat misleading. The City of Brotherly Love hadn't imposed a tax on blogs. Its officials had merely called for bloggers to purchase the same "business privilege license" required of all local enterprises that earn revenue. That was bad enough, however: in practice, it meant that bloggers making a few dollars a year from Google ads faced a bill that would put their sites in the red many times over.

Upstart publishers in Philadelphia have endured tougher times. The municipality's first printer, William Bradford, set up his unwieldy press in 1685, soon got arrested for seditious libel, and fled to New York City. Philly's most famous publisher, Benjamin Franklin, started his own print shop in 1727, but only after apprenticing at his brother's Boston operation, working on a ship's press, and studying European publishing technology for two years. As late as the 1990s, the average Philadelphian still found it beyond his financial means to reach a mass audience on a regular basis. Now, in the digital age, anyone with a laptop and an Internet connection can publish and even get paid for it, though not nearly enough to justify government fees better suited to the old-media model.

The story of Philadelphia's bloggers illuminates an issue that every city will grapple with



soon. Technology enables city dwellers to engage in sophisticated, small-scale entrepreneurial activity as never before. That anyone can easily become a publisher enhances aggregate output and innovation, as do new opportunities in other industries where barriers to entry are falling. Too often, however, city ordinances that arose in a pre-digital economy stymie these efforts.

The taxi is a good example. Famously subject to municipal regulation, most fleets underserve their cities. It's easy to hail a ride in Manhattan because of its density and singular geography—and orders of magnitude harder in most other cities, especially outside the Northeast. Enter UberCab, a smartphone application for the Bay Area that uses GPS to locate cabs, match them to passengers in real time, and facilitate their transaction, even calculating distances, determining prices, and handling payments. Similar technology could make every city dweller with a car a part-time cabbie, picking up passengers whenever convenient—except that most cities prohibit such informal arrangements.

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Or consider the food truck. These snack bars on wheels once pulled into office parks, played "La Cucaracha" on a novelty horn, and served up banal fare. Their successors, the gourmet food trucks of today, are made possible partly by social-media networks like Twitter, where foodies communicate and savvy food-truck owners alert dedicated followers to their ever-changing locations. Consumers get a cheaper option for great eats, aspiring restaurant owners get a culinary laboratory at a small fraction of restaurant start-up costs, and cities enhance street culture and ultimately their restaurant mix. But permit costs and public-health codes written for traditional restaurants impede food trucks' operations. And established restaurateurs stand ready to do battle against would-be competitors, lobbying for overly restrictive parking regulations and other red tape.

These are but two examples of the smaller-scale entrepreneurship poised to explode in the city of the future. Already common are the urbanite who sells used furniture via Craigslist, his roommate who hawks rooftop tomatoes at the local farmers' market, and the man one stall over who brews his own kombucha, allowing twentysomethings to pay with debit cards that can now be processed via iPhone.

But when a bureaucrat hears about these budding businesses, he's likely to wonder if the kombucha guy passed his mandated food-handler course, brewed his drink in a kitchen certified for commercial preparation, and obtained the liability insurance required of food merchants. That trifecta of red tape is required in New York State; a business license and a vendor permit are needed, too. So cumbersome are these barriers to entry that many a food entrepreneur is dissuaded from getting started (or else driven to sell underground). In tomorrow's city, it might as easily be an experimental micro-manufacturer who is technically forbidden from running a small 3-D "printer" in her apartment, or any number of people who want to engage in local commerce but suffer from rules that benefit older, larger-scale operations.

City officials would do better to take lessons from the tech industry. Assume that everyone wants to be an active economic participant, rather than a passive patron of established firms. Allow for different degrees of entrepreneurship. Make submitting necessary forms as easy as uploading high-definition films to Vimeo. Craft minimal rules that aim to facilitate transactions, rather than regulate them out of existence. The successful cities of the future will very probably be those that harness the entrepreneurial ambitions of empowered citizens.

Fragile Urban Families

New findings show just how bad things are for the kids.

Kay S. Hymowitz

Poverty is on the rise, according to census data, and now affects 14.3 percent of the population, up from 13.2 percent in 2008. A stumbling economy obviously explains the recent uptick. But those who think that poor urban families' problems have an economic fix would do well to pick up the fall issue of *The Future of Children*, a journal jointly published by the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and the Brookings Institution (I sit on its advisory board). The articles in the issue are based on findings from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, which has followed 5,000 children and their urban, primarily minority, parents since the kids were born in the late 1990s. The FFCWS now constitutes the most extensive, long-term database on the family lives of the urban poor we've ever had, and the dismal picture that it paints of low-income, unmarried couples and their children has nothing to do with the Great Recession.

One of the study's most surprising initial findings was that the large majority—80 percent—of poor, unmarried couples were romantically involved at the time of their child's birth. In fact, 50 percent of the couples were living together. Fathers almost always visited the mothers and children in the hospital and usually gave financial support. Even better, most of these new parents said that there was a 50/50 chance that they would eventually marry each other. They spoke highly of their partners' commitment to their children and of their supportiveness.

But within five years, a tiny 15 percent of the unmarried couples had actually taken wedding

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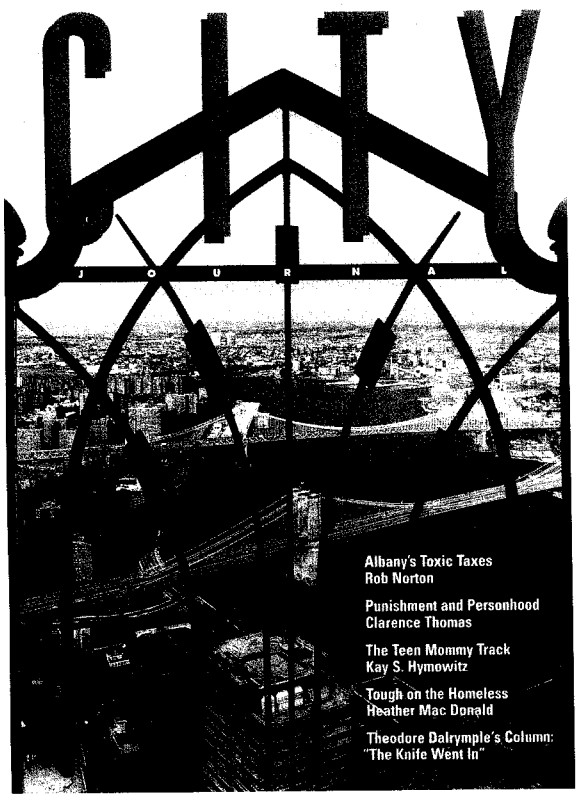
Soundings



vows, while a whopping 60 percent had split up. At the five-year mark, only 36 percent of the children lived with their fathers, and half of the other 64 percent hadn't seen their dads in the last month. One-half to two-thirds of the absent fathers provided little or no financial support.

A parental breakup is hard enough on kids, but the prevalence of what experts call "multipartner fertility" is salt in their wounds. By the time the children were five, 20 percent of their mothers had a child by a different man; 27 percent of the kids were living with their mother's new live-in partner. These relationships tended to reduce father involvement: dads are less likely to come around when a new man is in the house. In the long run, it's not even clear that the new boyfriends are good for the women involved, since mothers with children by more than one man "reported significantly less available [financial] support than those with children by one man."

Adding to the child-unfriendly atmosphere are the many fathers who go on to have children with another woman. The journal reports that men with children in a new relationship spend less time and money on their previous children. One study also found—no surprise—that the quality of "co-parenting" declines when a new girlfriend or boyfriend enters the picture. Breakups turn out to be hard on men themselves, too; men living with their children worked longer hours and earned more, while those who moved out were more likely to become unemployed.

And what do we know about the impact of all this on children? The Fragile Families kids growing up with single mothers have more behavior problems than those with two parents; those problems worsen with every "transition," that is, every new relationship and breakup. There's even evidence that instability affects children's cognitive performance. Worst of all, children growing up with a boyfriend or stepdad in the house are at greater risk of abuse, a fact horribly demonstrated in Brooklyn recently when two-year-old Aiyden Davis died as a result of his mother's boyfriend's beatings.

Eventually, the economy will improve. That's not likely to change much for the children in fragile families.

The Man That Bankrupted Harrisburg

A debt-loving mayor has busted the budget of Pennsylvania's capital.

Steven Malanga

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, has teetered on the edge of fiscal ruin for over a year. Officials have blamed the budget problems mostly on an incinerator-plant project that became a costly boondoggle. But when Harrisburg rocked the municipal-finance world in early September by warning that it could skip a payment on its general-obligation bonds—which weren't tied to the incinerator debt—it sent a different message about the increasingly unwise ways that municipalities use borrowing these days (see "The Muni-Bond Debt Bomb," Summer 2010).

Harrisburg's debt crisis stems from a long borrowing spree by its recently retired mayor, Stephen Reed, who governed the city for 28

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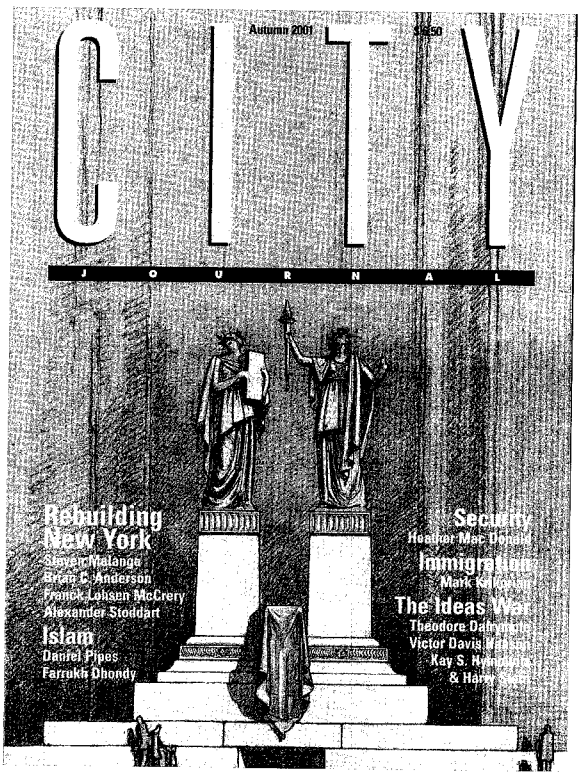

years. Long before the incinerator debacle, Reed borrowed liberally to invest in projects that the private sector wouldn't finance on its own: building parking garages downtown; constructing and later renovating a baseball stadium; and then buying the minor-league baseball team, the Harrisburg Senators, that played there after it threatened to bolt town. As the local newspaper, the *Patriot-News*, put it when Reed retired, he "never met a bond deal he didn't like."

What enabled the long borrowing binge was the perception that some of Reed's early ventures were successes. The national press touted the city's baseball purchase as a model of how communities could save their sports teams. Similarly, after Harrisburg spent $39 million in mostly borrowed money to create the National Civil War Museum, city officials hailed the effort as a successful gamble when it opened in February 2001.

But such projects typically bring much less economic benefit than promised, and the mounting debt can wreck a city's balance sheets. In buying the Senators, Harrisburg officials admitted that only about a dozen local firms benefited significantly from the team. That shouldn't surprise: most sports franchises, research shows, generate paltry long-term economic gains for the simple reason that they mostly create low-paying service jobs, and not many of those at that. As for museums and other tourist attractions paid for with government dollars, they often struggle to lure vacationers. The Civil War museum never lived up to expectations and has been losing money.

Over the last decade, Reed began to spend borrowed cash in ever-riskier ways. In 2003, the *Patriot-News* discovered that he had used public debt to buy nearly $5 million in American historical artifacts, including a $125,000 pistol once owned by Doc Holliday, in anticipation of opening a Wild West museum in Harrisburg. Neither the museum nor the purchases had city council approval. And then Reed put together the incinerator project, seeking to upgrade a local plant with speculative new technology. Design flaws and delays plagued the project, burdening the city with nearly $288 million in debt and $70 million in bond payments this year alone.

Harrisburg's residents should have received a wake-up call about the dubious nature of Reed's economic development schemes when the city's budget crashed in 2005, during a national expansion that saw many other municipalities awash in surplus tax revenues. Even before the city felt the full effect of the incinerator project's debt, Harrisburg had laid off workers and cut back services to deal with budget shortfalls.

In September, Pennsylvania governor Ed Rendell announced that the state would help the city meet its general-obligation bond payments, fearing that a default would make it impossible for other state municipalities to borrow. But Harrisburg remains deeply indebted. The city's predicament ought to be a warning to other cities that use borrowing to finance projects of questionable economic value. Often, the rationale that politicians give voters for such projects is merely the existence of a gleaming new facility in a competing town. But the true measure of costly developments should be whether they generate economic improvement and fiscal stability over

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the long term—and judged by that criterion, they often fail, as they have in Harrisburg.

Rhyme Scheme

An NEA initiative debauches the educational value of verse.

Michael Knox Beran

In 2005, the National Endowment for the Arts, together with the Poetry Foundation, established Poetry Out Loud, a program intended to encourage "the nation's youth to learn about great poetry through memorization and recitation." In the 2009–10 school year, some 325,000 students from across the United States participated, and in April, 17-year-old Amber Rose Johnson of Rhode Island became national champion. She recited, among other poems, Shakespeare's Sonnet 116—"Let me not to the marriage of true minds / Admit impediments."

The theory underlying Poetry Out Loud is sound. For over two millennia, the recitation of poetry formed one of the pillars of elementary education in the West. It fell out of favor in the twentieth century, a casualty of the progressive revolution in schools, but in recent years, the belief that poetry is a profound educational force has regained credence. T. S. Eliot spoke of the "music of poetry," and music, scientists tell us, elicits a mysterious but not negligible response in the depths of the brain. It may be that Plato was right when he asserted that the rhythms and harmonies of poetry "sink furthest into the depths of the soul and take hold of it most firmly by bringing it nobility and grace."

Poetry Out Loud fails in practice, however, to emphasize sufficiently those qualities of poetry essential to its educative power. It is not simply that the program has been avowedly influenced by hip-hop, with its typically monotonous rhythms, and by "slam poetry," a form of expression more akin to political propaganda than to art. A deeper problem is that the Poetry Out Loud anthology, on which participants must draw in choosing the poems they recite, favors modern poets, many of whom lack the rhythmical sophistication of the acknowledged masters of versification—the major poets in the literary canon. Of some 360 poets featured in the online anthology, more than 200 were born after 1910. With poetry so recent, it is difficult to distinguish poems with a permanent value from those that reflect transient fashions. Much of the poetry chosen for the anthology is, moreover, metrically irregular; whatever the other merits of this verse, it cannot match the intricacy and musical complexity of poetry composed in fidelity to the traditional rubrics of metrical order.

No less troubling is the failure of the NEA to make aesthetic excellence its sole criterion in selecting poets born *before* 1910. Considerations of sex and race have evidently weighed heavily. Louise Bogan, not a major poet, has three poems included in the anthology; William Wordsworth has two. Lorine Niedecker is allotted two poems, Matthew Arnold one. The single poem of Coleridge that makes the grade ("Kubla Khan") places him in the same rank as Phillis Wheatley, also represented by a single poem. Ann and Jane Taylor have obtained the NEA's laureate wreath for "Twinkle, twinkle, little star"—yet Walter Scott, Henry Vaughan, and Algernon Charles Swinburne have been left out altogether.

The NEA's clumsy appeal to egalitarian politics in the judgment of poetic merit raises the question of whether government is competent to promote poetry in the first place. The perception of officials charged with administering great national projects is practically bound to be ecumenical: they must do their latitudinarian best to satisfy a thousand competing constituencies. But it is a paradox of the cosmopolitan vision that, while its range is wide, its culture is shallow. Cosmopolitanism, Eliot said, "can be the enemy of universality," for universality never comes except through a deep comprehension of some few things that "one knows thoroughly." Poetry Out Loud bears out the insight; perhaps its most striking quality is its superficiality. In trying to be all things to all people, it can never mean much to any single individual. Living movements, John Henry Newman said, "do not come of committees."

The effort to revive the poetic and musical culture that once animated schools and communities must originate not in Washington but in the provincial life of schools and communities themselves. Just as the great poets who have a universal power to touch the heart have often

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been strongly marked by the customs, manners, and traditions of particular times and places, so the educational tradition that successfully introduces the universal poet to a particular community is likely to have a strongly eccentric character, born of a sensitivity to the community's purely local culture—the intrinsic poetry of the place. Education, to be sure, should no more have a narrowly parochial or separatist object than knowledge of language should restrict itself to a particular dialect or tongue. But as the Roman Empire and the Roman Church discovered, introducing the fruits of universal culture into discrete communities requires making allowance for the particular soils in which the seed is to be planted. One cannot federalize poetry—or, indeed, education itself.

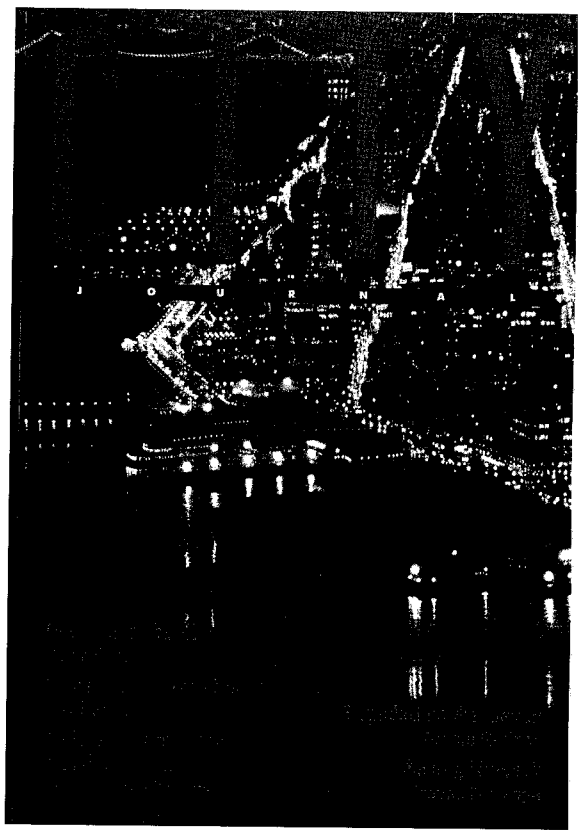
When Newman, as vicar of Littlemore, near Oxford, found that the parish school had fallen into slovenly ways, he went into the classroom himself and began to teach the children to sing. Their voices, he said, were "so thrilling as to make one sick with love." The rhythms and harmonies of music and poetry not only can bring order to a schoolroom; they can also help awaken minds. Yet it is precisely this power of awakening minds that a program devised by a central authority can never possess. Wherever it is the fashion, in Newman's words, "to merge the nation in the government," wherever the central administration has promulgated such a multitude of rules as to prevent people from doing the rousing work through their own efforts, there the citizenry will assuredly sleep.

The Bus Market Booms

Innovators are making travel affordable, with no foe in sight but the feds.

Benjamin A. Plotinsky

In 1969, Jane Jacobs published *The Economy of Cities*, in which she offered some striking examples of urban entrepreneurship. One was Ida Rosenthal, a New York dressmaker who became interested in underwear design as a way to improve how dresses fit; Rosenthal invented the brassiere and launched a company, Maidenform, to manufacture it. Another was the Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company, a small Minneapolis sand-digging outfit that, after experimenting with adhesives in order to manufacture sandpaper, soon grew more interested in the adhesives than in the sandpaper and became the colossus 3M. These companies generated income for their owners and jobs for their employees; they also created business opportunities for other firms whose products and services they needed.



This process of "adding new kinds of work to other kinds of older work," as Jacobs put it, energizes and renews urban economies to this day. Take Pei Lin Liang, a Chinese immigrant who worked as a deliveryman for a New York noodle factory. In the 1990s, presumably because he had grown accustomed to driving, he began shuttling passengers around the city to make extra money. Then he noticed that "many Chinese families had children attending elite schools in Boston," as Michael Luo later reported in the *New York*

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Times, so he started a daily van service from New York to Beantown in 1998. The business took off, Liang replaced his van with some buses, and soon his clientele was no longer exclusively Chinese.

Liang had illustrated one of Jacobs's most compelling points: that "when new work is added to older work, the addition often cuts ruthlessly across categories of work." That is, "it was not from the underwear industry that the brassiere emerged," any more than 3M, the developer of Scotch tape, had set out to make office supplies. Similarly, it was not a bus company but a noodle deliveryman who discovered a big demand for cheap intercity buses that picked up passengers in prearranged locations on the street, rather than in bus terminals, which are often dingy or located in dangerous neighborhoods.

Supply quickly rose to meet demand. Rival companies in Chinatown began challenging Liang for passengers, resulting in a price war. Boston fares plummeted from the original $25, already a bargain, to just $10. Some firms added service to Washington, D.C. Two companies run by Hasidic Jews from Brooklyn entered the fray. It wasn't long before the scrappy start-ups were joined by behemoths: BoltBus, owned by the existing bus companies Greyhound and Peter Pan; and Megabus, owned by a large Scottish firm.

Today, the intercity bus market thrives, with a host of companies battling furiously to lure customers from one another. Some sell the cheapest tickets; others drop off passengers in convenient midtown Manhattan instead of Chinatown, or in Washington's wealthier suburbs instead of downtown; others offer service beyond the Northeast; others bill themselves as luxury companies, offering bottled water, electrical outlets, and wireless Internet access; others are experimenting with still greater luxury—and higher fares—by giving riders more legroom.

The curbside buses are a godsend for those who can't afford to take trains or airplanes. They may even have made Greyhound's fares more affordable. A quick survey of newspapers shows that over the last 60 years, a one-way Greyhound ticket from New York to Washington generally cost $40 to $70 (in 2010 dollars). Nowadays, you can buy the same ticket for $17 on Megabus, for $21 on Washington Deluxe—or for as little as $14 on Greyhound. Though Greyhound denies that the competition has affected its fares, it seems likely that the company has lowered them to compete with its smaller rivals.

Nowhere in *The Economy of Cities* does Jacobs explain how to *squelch* urban entrepreneurship, but the federal government has recently furnished us with a case study. Amtrak, the government-owned passenger-train company, currently charges anywhere from $106 to $225 for a daytime one-way ticket from New York to Washington. It has been poorly operated for years and routinely runs a huge loss, partly because of labor agreements far more generous than those found in the private sector. So it must receive a federal subsidy, one that amounted to $1.6 billion in 2010. The current federal government is surely to blame for allocating these funds, but no more than its predecessors, all of which kept extracting cash from taxpayers' wallets and bestowing it on a service that caters to a tiny (and relatively well-to-do) fraction of American travelers.

Where Congress and President Obama do deserve special blame is the so-called stimulus package of 2009, which—apparently because that year's Amtrak subsidy of $1.5 billion wasn't enough—dumped *another* $1.3 billion into the Amtrak sinkhole. The stimulus also gave states $8 billion for high-speed rail projects—much of which will surely wind up in Amtrak's hands—even though high-speed rail will probably fail to improve travel times appreciably on shorter routes, just as it will fail to compete profitably with airlines on longer ones. And in September 2010, Obama announced a massive infrastructure plan that would pour still more money into building "a national high-speed rail network."

Among the taxpayers funding Amtrak's incompetence, of course, are Gotham's bus entrepreneurs. For them, the subsidies constitute a double insult: not only must they watch as their enormous competitor receives money that lets it continue attracting customers; they must also help foot the bill. And if their taxes rise to pay for this government's historic munificence, the fares they charge will surely rise in tandem—just one more way that wasteful public spending fattens the richer with the dollars of the poorer.

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The Next Wave of Urban Reform

Steven Malanga

In November 1990, the mayors of America's biggest cities gathered in New York to clamor for more federal aid. The unusual summit was a warning: in Atlanta mayor Maynard Jackson's words, "If the cities don't make it, America's going down the tubes." To those who criticized the mayors for seeking a handout, Jackson retorted, "We have a right to demand what our people deserve." The cities had problems, Chicago mayor Richard Daley said, that "we cannot solve . . . ourselves."

As it turned out, the summit marked not the dawn of a new era but the closing of an old one. Since the mid-1960s, many big-city mayors and Washington policymakers had argued that the problems plaguing America's cities—rising crime, deteriorating schools, sluggish economies, and social dysfunction—resulted from national and global economic forces that urban politicians were powerless to resist. Out of that period came an array of ambitious federal programs to aid city residents and revitalize struggling urban neighborhoods. Even though

The abandoned Michigan Central Station, part of a rich architectural legacy that Detroit could reclaim

FROM "THE RUINS OF DETROIT" BY YVES MARCHAND AND ROMAIN MEFFRE STEIDL

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Mayors Cory Booker and Dave Bing fight to save two of America's most distressed cities.

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the programs—many of them carried out under the banner of the War on Poverty—did little to boost cities' fortunes, the refrain that urban woes were Washington's responsibility became commonplace among mayors and remained so for nearly three decades.

But just a few years after the summit, America witnessed the rise of a new group of mayors who rejected the notion that the federal government—or anyone else—should be their savior. Milwaukee mayor John Norquist decried the "tin-cup urbanism" that kept city officials looking to Washington for money and answers. New York's Rudolph Giuliani argued that the tired ideology of urban dependency let cities "off the hook completely" for fixing their problems. The reformers, whose ranks also included innovators like Stephen Goldsmith in Indianapolis and Bret Schundler in Jersey City, didn't just talk; they implemented policies that drove down crime, offered children and parents better alternatives to failing public schools, sent welfare recipients back to work, and improved the delivery of public services. Yet despite these successes, the urban-reform movement of the 1990s bypassed many cities, such as Buffalo, Cleveland, and St. Louis, where corruption and bad government continued to fester.

Now, though, at least two mayors of cities perennially deemed hopeless are trying to bring urban reform to city hall: Cory Booker, entering the fifth year of his fight to remake Newark; and Dave Bing, the former Detroit Pistons basketball star barely 18 months into his job at Detroit's helm. Both mayors battle entrenched cultures of patronage, sleaze, and dependency that have made their cities virtual wards of the state and federal governments. Both challenge residents and policymakers to find solutions at home, not look for them in Washington. In some ways, their jobs are even tougher than those of the reformers of the nineties, since the troubles their cities face are more ingrained. Their efforts nevertheless offer two of America's most distressed cities the first hope in decades.

Since the early days of the Republic, America's cities have been centers of innovation, wealth, and power. As they grew larger and their governments more commanding, places like Boston, Chicago, Newark, New York, Philadelphia, and St. Louis also became battlegrounds where political machines contended for influence. The early ideal of the part-time citizen-legislator gave way to the professional pol. In his 1904 *The Shame of the Cities*, Lincoln Steffens observed that big-city governments across America had been undermined by a series of problems, including police corruption, politicians using the public till for their own gain, and rampant bribery in awarding public contracts, known at the time as "boodle."

The out-of-control corruption brought in response a reform era led by progressives, like Theodore Roosevelt, who argued that modern scientific principles and ideas of efficiency, not smoky backroom deals, should direct city policy. For instance, as president of the New York City Board of Police Commissioners from 1895 to 1897, Roosevelt revamped the city's police department, considered among the most crooked in America, by changing hiring procedures to favor the most qualified candidates rather than the politically connected.

However, some voters, not without reason, saw the progressives as cold, distant elites, uninterested in neighborhood issues. And the reformers occasionally overreached, as with their support of Prohibition. As a result, progressives—New York City mayor Seth Low, who governed in 1902, is a good example—were sometimes turned out of office as the public's zeal for reform waned. So the old-style ethnic political machines held on to some measure of influence in many American cities through the first half of the twentieth century. And cities that remained in thrall to the machines weren't ready to confront the economic and social changes that swept the nation during the 1960s.

REBECCA COOK/REUTERS/CORBIS

Newark is a case in point. Founded by Puritan farmers in the seventeenth century, it slowly began to transform itself in the mid-nineteenth century into a powerful regional manufacturing center, blessed with an important port, superb rail connections, and proximity to mighty New York City. The city thrived through the post–World War

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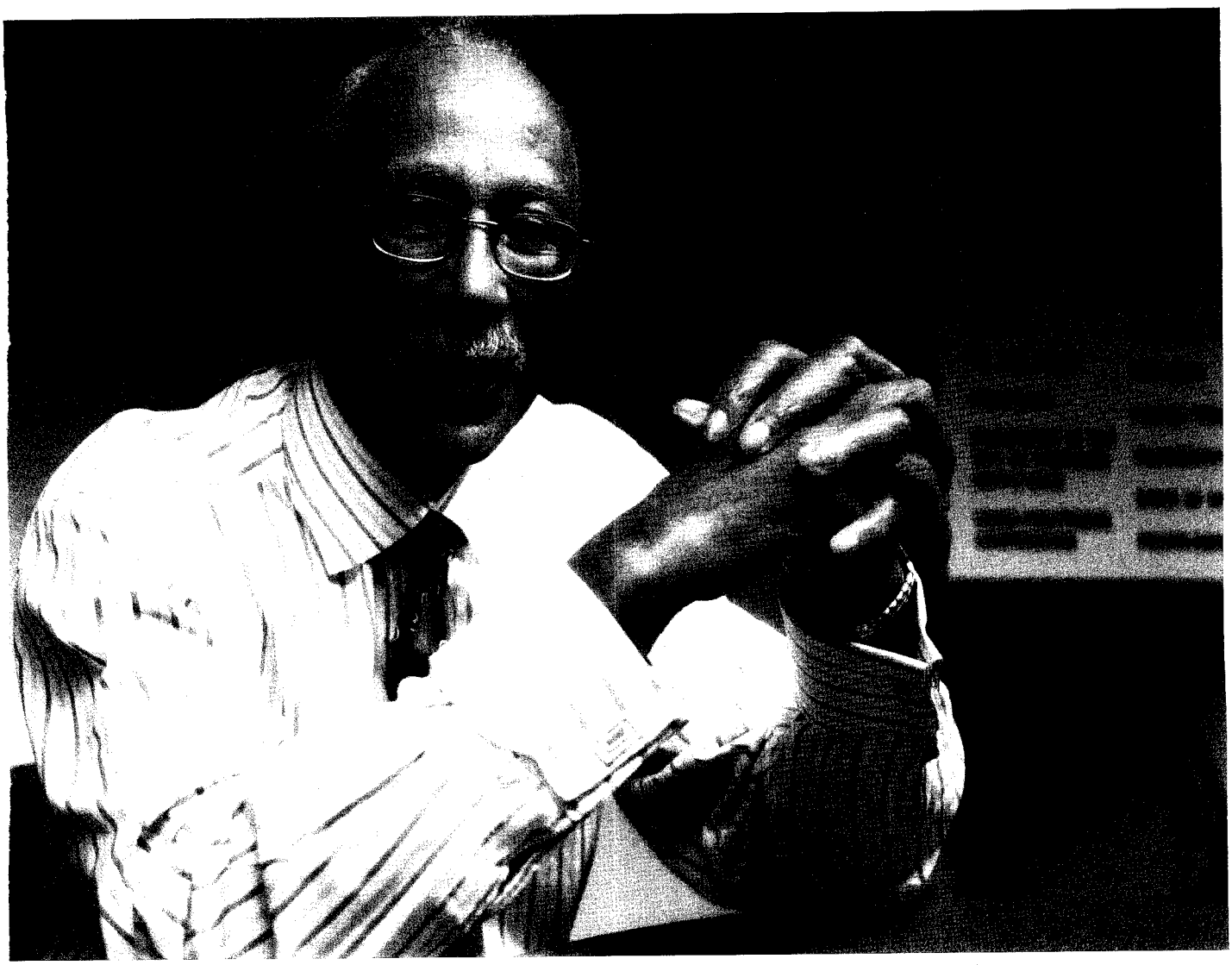

"All Bing and no bling": the former NBA star is streamlining the Motor City's bloated workforce.

II industrial boom, when its population swelled to nearly 440,000 residents in 1950 (see "Cory Booker's Battle to Save Newark," Spring 2007).

Newark's industrialization also attracted powerful unions, infiltrated by organized crime, whose members gained a stranglehold not only on labor but, through payoffs and influence peddling, on city government, too. Infamous bootlegger Abner "Longie" Zwillman, an associate of Al Capone, wielded enormous sway in Newark government from Prohibition until his 1959 death (killed by rivals, some say). Stepping into the void was a capo in the Genovese crime family, Ruggiero "Richie the Boot" Boiardo, who helped fix the 1962 mayoral election for Democratic congressman Hugh Addonizio.

The ongoing corruption had profound consequences. One 1950s study estimated that government's per-capita cost in Newark was twice as high as the average for similar American cities. When, starting in the late fifties, growing competition from southern states and overseas

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manufacturers put pressure on industrial concerns in Newark, businesses fled to cheaper venues—just as a generation of poor, unskilled blacks leaving the rural South were resettling in the city, adding to the ranks of the impoverished and unemployed. Tensions rose, and finally a confrontation between police and residents of the predominantly black Central Ward exploded into violence. The riots of July 1967 devastated swaths of Newark and sent a middle class that had lost faith in the city's incompetent government scrambling to the suburbs.

The riots prompted investigations, and Mayor Addonizio was eventually convicted of corruption. But the old, mob-influenced political machine simply gave way to a new kind of machine that emerged in the 1960s. This new machine, made up of nonprofit organizations and public-sector unions, thrived on the billions of dollars that architects of the federal War on Poverty bestowed on Newark and other reeling cities. Addonizio's successor, Kenneth Gibson, ran on a reform platform in 1970, but scandals continued to plague Newark during his 16 years in office, including his own indictment and trial for dispensing no-show jobs. Though Gibson avoided conviction, many city officials went to jail.

Gibson's successor, Sharpe James, won the mayoralty in 1986 after vowing to reform city hall, but little changed during his two decades in power. In 1995, the state, citing vast corruption within Newark's schools, took them over. The next year, Newark's police chief pleaded guilty to ripping off a federal fund designed to combat drug crime, at a time when the cash-starved department lacked computers and residents complained of waiting hours for 911 responses. James's chief of staff was found guilty of taking bribes; investigators had discovered $157,000 stuffed under the floorboards in his home. A prosecutor described city hall as a "supermarket," since everything was for sale. Several years later, a federal audit of the city's housing authority found millions of dollars misspent. In 2006, James himself went down on corruption charges. By then, governed for 35 years by mayors promising reform, Newark was worse off than ever, with a population shrunk to about 270,000, an unemployment rate double the national average, and a median family income just slightly above $30,000.

Like Newark, Detroit confronted increasingly severe social and economic problems during the second half of the twentieth century. Its auto industry began slumping in the mid-1950s—again, just as poor Southern blacks were pouring into the city. Detroit's key governmental institutions, notably its schools and its police department, proved woefully unprepared to deal with the challenges. Amid rising racial tensions in Detroit in the summer of 1967, a police raid on an after-hours club, breaking up a welcome-home party for two Vietnam veterans, ignited a series of confrontations that led to six days of awful riots.

Massive federal, state, and private aid showered on Detroit, but the city's downward spiral only worsened. Six years after the riots, Detroit elected its first black mayor, Coleman Young, who preached revival but who further polarized the city's race relations. In their groundbreaking paper "The Curley Effect"—named after James Michael Curley, mayor of Boston for much of the first half of the twentieth century, who favored Irish neighborhoods with extra services while promoting policies that encouraged other ethnic groups to leave the city—Harvard economists Edward Glaeser and Andrei Shleifer show how Young slashed services and departments valued by middle-class constituents while hiking taxes on middle- and higher-income residents, helping speed white flight. Detroit went from about 44 percent African-American when Young first took office to 76 percent by the end of his tenure.

Young was a onetime labor organizer with a radical bent, and his idea of reform was to blow up the putatively unjust power structure without worrying much about what to replace it with. For instance, rather than improve the largely white police department, often criticized as insensitive to the needs of the city's black neighborhoods, he went to war against it. In 1976, as crime was rising, he cut the force by an astonishing 20 percent. The police, reacting to Young's frequent attacks and worrying about charges of racism, became reluctant to fight crime. "I wouldn't write tickets for black kids," admitted former Detroit

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officer Freddie Williams in Tamar Jacoby's *Someone Else's House: America's Unfinished Struggle for Integration*. Young's handpicked police chief, William Hart, dismissed complaints about the lack of enforcement as "racism and sour grapes." Newspapers reported growing violence, such as a rock concert disrupted by a massive riot to which the undermanned police waited more than an hour to respond.

A refrain grew in Detroit's white neighborhoods, and in the suburbs that ringed it, that Young wanted it to be a black city. The charge gained credence with the razing of the city's Poletown neighborhood, an enclave of ethnic whites. To make way for a General Motors plant, the city seized more than 1,500 Poletown homes and 144 businesses and displaced some 3,500 people, half of whom were elderly and had lived there for decades. Residents resisted until the city withdrew services, including policing—a vivid illustration of the Curley effect. Arson became endemic. "The night air was always smoke-filled and people slept with guns nearby," wrote George Cosetti, a documentary filmmaker on hand at the time. "City services became almost nonexistent. There was virtually no trash pickup, no police presence and before long the once quiet neighborhood was a jumble of looters and demolition crews during the day and arsonists and fire trucks by night."

The Motor City's demographic transformation left it much poorer, with fewer resources to address its difficulties. The population declined by half a million, the unemployment rate doubled, and the poverty rate jumped by some 75 percent. Yet the population change also secured Young's hold on the electorate. His margin of victory increased in mayoral elections from a narrow initial win in 1973 to subsequent landslides. As his hold tightened, so did corruption and patronage within his administration. In another echo of Newark, to take one example, Detroit's police chief and one of his deputy chiefs got caught trying to embezzle more than $2 million from a fund that financed police undercover operations.

As Detroit crumbled around him, Young became distant and isolated. He cruised through the city in an armor-plated Cadillac and outside the city in a Rockwell Sabreliner jet that cost more than $600,000 a year to operate—this at a time when Detroit needed handouts from the state and federal governments to keep functioning. Federal grants paid for one-quarter to one-third of city employees' salaries at the height of Detroit's dependence.

As Detroit crumbled, Young became distant and isolated, cruising through the city in an armor-plated Cadillac.

The mayor's approach to governance outlasted him. When Young retired in 1993, Dennis Archer, a Michigan Supreme Court justice, won the mayoralty promising reform, but he struggled to enact his agenda in a city still dominated by Young's allies. And when Archer decided not to seek a third term in 2001, Detroiters elected 31-year-old Kwame Kilpatrick, a Michigan assemblyman soon known as the "hip-hop mayor." Under Kilpatrick, Detroit government returned to political extravagance and blatant patronage. Kilpatrick used a city credit card to pay for hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of lavish meals at pricey restaurants, spa massages, and Moët & Chandon champagne. He leased a Lincoln Navigator for his wife at taxpayer expense. As administrator of the city's water system, he bypassed procurement procedures to issue contracts to political allies, earning a rebuke from a Detroit judge. In the episode that eventually brought him down, he carried on an extramarital affair with his chief of staff and then lied about it under oath until text messages exposed him.

Kilpatrick ultimately pleaded guilty to two counts of obstruction of justice and agreed to resign. It was this long legacy of corruption and mismanagement that Dave Bing had in mind when he observed, in his State of the City address earlier this year, that he had "inherited a city near bankrupt financially, ethically, and operationally."

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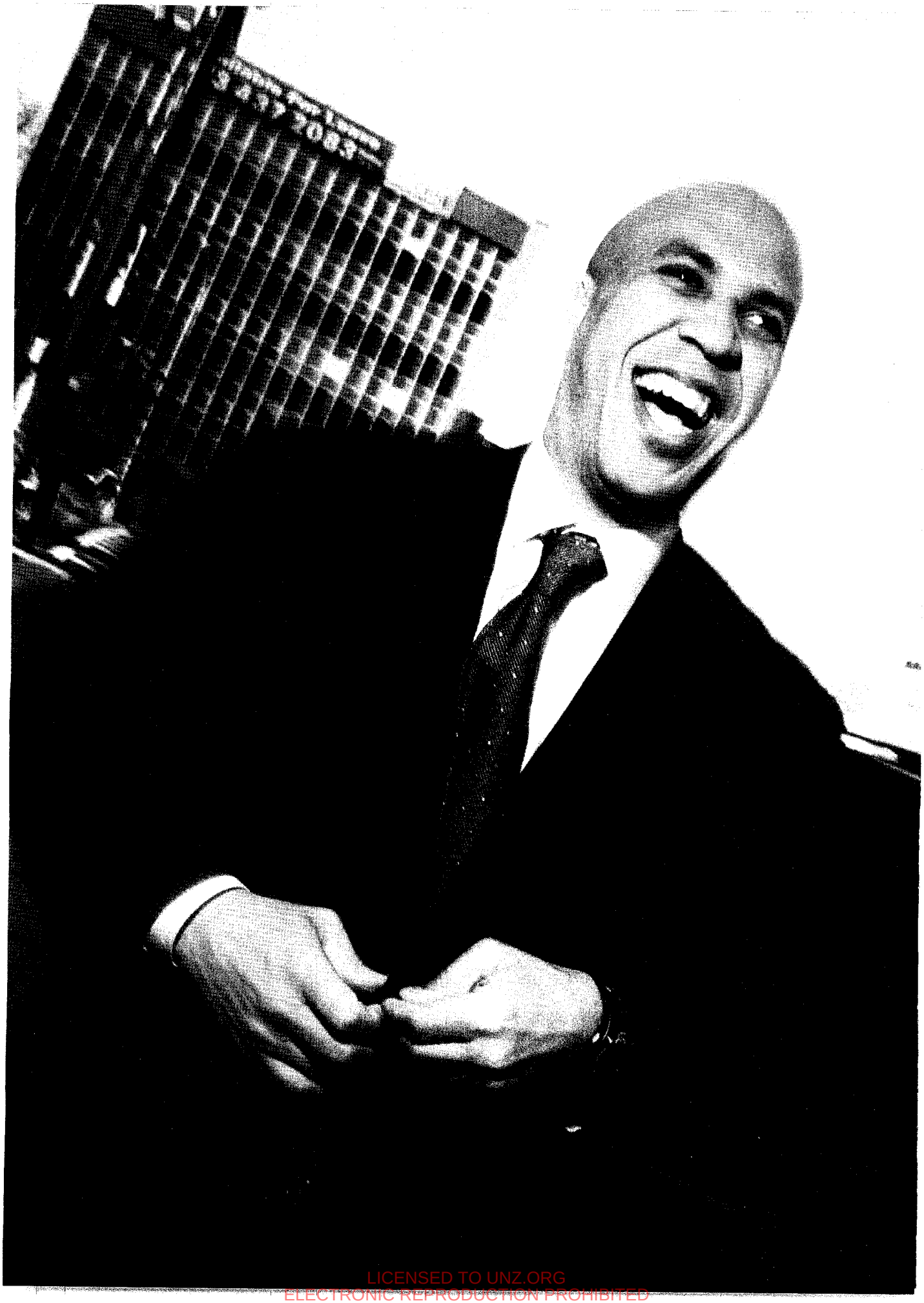

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oday, luckily, Newark and Detroit resemble each other in a more encouraging respect: their mayors are advancing remarkably similar ideas about how to restore trust in government, reestablish competence in city hall, and revamp essential services that a city must deliver if its citizens and businesses are to flourish. After five years, Booker has come close to effecting just such a transition, some argue. Newark "will never return to an insular, siloed city," maintained Rutgers University political scientist Clement Price during Booker's reelection campaign earlier this year. "Newark is increasingly driven by people guided to come here because of Cory Booker and because of the new Newark."

The two mayors have made disorder and crime a top issue—understandably, since both Detroit and Newark have, at various points, earned the unfortunate sobriquet "America's crime capital." Booker signaled his seriousness on this crucial front by selecting Garry McCarthy to lead his police department. McCarthy is a veteran of the Giuliani-era New York Police Department, which drove down crime in Gotham 70 percent by implementing the policing innovations of Commissioner William Bratton and his successors. To those who criticized hiring an outsider, Booker said he wanted results, not political posturing: "I will be relentless in the enforcement of the law. My residents shouldn't have to deal with drug dealing on their corners punctuated by violence."

McCarthy instituted a computer-based, NYPD-style crime-tracking system in Newark. He created the city's first fugitive-apprehension squad. The police also installed a technologically advanced gunshot-detection system to alert them quickly to shootings anywhere in the city. Supported by the mayor, Newark cops have directed more of their resources to enforcing quality-of-life laws, seeking to instill respect for the law.

The recently reelected Mayor Booker has raised millions of dollars in private money for Newark's charter schools and parks.

BRUCE GILDEN/MAGNUM PHOTOS

So far, overall crime is down about 15 percent since Booker took office. Violent crime has fallen even further.

The changes are clearly working. So far, overall crime is down about 15 percent since Booker took office. Violent crime has fallen even further—shootings are down nearly 50 percent and murders by about a third, though a series of drug-related shootings spiked the crime rate briefly this summer.

Booker is also trying to break the cycle of recidivism, a huge problem in Newark as ex-cons return to the city—and to their criminal ways. With support from various private groups (including *City Journal*'s publisher, the Manhattan Institute), Newark has introduced a promising new program based on the successful welfare reform of the nineties, which required aid recipients to work. The program has already placed some 500 ex-offenders in jobs. "Work provides dignity," Booker says. "It's a powerful moral, spiritual transition a person makes."

Like Booker, the more recently elected Bing is working to bring modern policing to his city. One of America's most violent urban areas, with a murder rate eight times that of New York, Detroit desperately needs better policing. The Detroit police make arrests in just 37 percent of all homicides, compared with a 60 percent arrest rate nationally. Whole floors of detention facilities in the city sit vacant, not because crime has fallen but because cops make so few arrests. Residents also complain about 911 calls that go unanswered. Public cynicism about the police is understandably widespread. "I've talked to dozens, probably hundreds, of people in the community who are telling me they never made a report because the police never came," one official told the *Detroit Free Press*. "The delay in response time is such that many, many, many crimes don't get reported."

During his mayoral campaign, Bing said that reducing crime "requires a data-driven process built upon timely, accurate crime reporting" and "rapid deployment" of police to troubled areas, adding that "this policing philosophy has

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proven successful in other cities, including but not limited to New York City, which is arguably the safest large city in America." Once elected, Bing kept his word and began installing a crime-tracking system like New York's. He also found resources to put 150 more cops on the street to quicken response times to 911 calls, and the police department has established new units, including one to track down fugitives. Bing has worked to reopen police precincts closed by previous mayors and embarked on a plan to tear down vacant homes in the city, especially those near schools, that have become havens for drug dealing and other criminal activity.

Still, Bing has no easy task ahead. Shortly before he took office, a *Detroit News* investigation revealed that the police department had been systematically undercounting crimes, including murders, for years. Murders alone, the police admitted, were 23 percent higher than reported. Adding to Bing's woes is that the police chief he selected to push for reform resigned, just a year into his term, after agreeing to have the department take part in a TV series that portrayed Detroit unfavorably.

Partly to end the perception that municipal government is an employment service, Booker has looked outside Newark's traditionally patronage-laden government to find new talent. Heavily criticized himself for being an outsider during his run for mayor, Booker brought in not just McCarthy but also Stefan Pryor, a former New York City executive, to serve as head of economic development, and Bo Kemp, a New York native, tech executive, and Harvard Business School grad, to take over as Newark's business administrator.

Booker has also tried to break from the old days of patronage and corruption by reducing bloat. In the waning days of the James administration, a federal investigation into Newark's housing authority found it acting as a jobs program, using money intended for capital projects and maintenance to pad payrolls. Booker's housing director, announcing that government in Newark would no longer operate as employer of last resort, cut the agency's payroll by 50 percent and saved another $1.5 million annually by outsourcing services to private contractors. Unfortunately, such moves have been unpopular in a city where government has long been the biggest employer. Booker has thus made only partial headway in shrinking the rest of the city's workforce, which is one reason that the city has confronted outsize budget problems during the current economic downturn. His latest goal is to eliminate about 700 more municipal jobs over the next several years.

Rather than expecting new funding from Washington or from the cash-strapped state government, Booker has turned to private foundations and charities for help in enacting his agenda. Many have responded because of Booker's convincing argument that he is turning the city around. His privately funded endeavors include a Newark police fund, which has raised some $3 million to pay for innovations like cameras in public places and the gunshot-detection system. He has also raised millions of dollars in private money to support charter schools and clean up and maintain city parks. Several donors stepped up during recent budget shortfalls to keep city services, like pools, from being cut. As one donor to the parks told the *New York Times*, "I can't imagine them doing this while Sharpe James controlled the parks department. You'd worry the money would be mismanaged or looted."

Bing has been even more adamant about streamlining and professionalizing. During the campaign, Bing suggested that his private-sector experience—after playing in the NBA, he founded a steel company, built it into a successful manufacturing conglomerate, and managed it for 30 years—would help him transform city government. Shortly after taking office, he announced a new dress code at City Hall, required workers there to be at their desks by 8 AM, and asked them to sign a pledge to adhere to the city's ethics policy. He also commissioned a panel of experts to identify ways to overhaul the city's creaky government. It came up with dozens of recommendations that could save some $500 million over several years, including privatizing crucial city assets like airport management and consolidating and downsizing the government.

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Bing has turned to the city's business community, so often shut out of Detroit government for the past 40 years, for talent. He lured Robert Buckler, former chief operating officer of Detroit Edison, out of retirement to serve as his own COO. Bing also hired a General Motors veteran to head up city procurement and a former executive at Freedom One Financial as controller. The mayor is particularly eager to convince businesses that Detroit government is doing things differently now. "If you're looking to do business with the City of Detroit, here's a piece of advice: the best bid wins," Bing said recently. "I've made it clear to our city departments and contractors that the old way of doing things is unacceptable."

Bing has turned to the city's business community, so often shut out of Detroit government for the past 40 years, for talent.

The new mayor's boldest argument may be that Detroit needs to shrink to revive. Detroit has contracted from 2 million residents to about 900,000; whole areas of the city have virtually emptied. As many as 70,000 homes stand abandoned. On some blocks, many homes have gone unoccupied and untended for so long that summer vegetation completely engulfs them; only the outline of the house suggests something man-made. Detroiters refer to certain city districts as "feral"—that is, having reverted to nature. Yet the city must still provide services to these areas' few remaining occupants, at great cost.

Bing hopes to raze entire underpopulated neighborhoods and relocate their few residents to more viable areas of the city. Perhaps as much as one-quarter of Detroit would revert to unoccupied parkland and woods under Bing's plan. The controversial initiative is a necessary step, the mayor believes, in reducing the size of government and hence regaining control of finances, out of balance after years of mismanagement. The city has an accumulated deficit of $300 million. Even though Bing has already cut about 1,000 positions, the city still employs some 13,000 workers to serve its fewer than 900,000 residents, yielding one of the highest ratios of workers to population among major American cities.

Despite the many encouraging initiatives under way, Mayors Booker and Bing face formidable challenges—above all, their cities' dismal schools. In recent state assessment tests, about 70 percent of Newark's middle school students failed to show proficiency in language arts. Of the estimated 11,750 high school students in the city's system, about 5,400 will drop out before graduating, a new state report estimates. Booker, who cofounded an education-reform group before becoming mayor, made little headway until recently in persuading New Jersey to return control of the schools to Newark. But September's $100 million donation to the Newark school system by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, who decided to invest in Newark after meeting Booker, has persuaded New Jersey governor Chris Christie to give the mayor increased say in running the system. Booker also continues to advocate for more choice as a way to improve schools, backing a proposed state law that would let businesses make tax-deductible contributions to a scholarship fund to send kids in districts with failing schools to private institutions.

Detroit's school system is in even worse shape than Newark's, if that's possible. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recently called it "a national disgrace." The problems are both financial and academic. Because the political class in Detroit has long viewed the schools as patronage mills, the system didn't shrink as enrollment fell by half over the last decade. A state-appointed monitor has uncovered approximately 500 employees on the payroll in positions that aren't budgeted. He's requiring workers in the system to show up to collect their checks in person because of widespread concerns about "ghost" employees ripping off taxpayers. Detroit also suffers from astonishingly poor academic standards. In

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last year's National Assessment of Educational Progress, Detroit's students registered the lowest score of any school system in the history of the test, with 69 percent of fourth-graders and 77 percent of eighth-graders scoring below the basic level in math.

Bing is pushing to regain the power to appoint school officials, which currently resides with the state. Supporting him is a coalition of business and civic groups called Excellent Schools Detroit, which is promoting a referendum that would make the mayor responsible for the system. Bing and the coalition are also seeking to raise $200 million in private money to start at least 70 charter schools in the city. One reason the group is willing to back the initiative is confidence in Bing, according to Sandy Baruah, president of the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce. "Dave Bing is not a typical politician," Baruah says. "He's focused on the fundamentals of better government. He's all Bing and no bling."

Newark and Detroit retain strengths that reform mayors can exploit. In fact, Newark should never have experienced such a steep decline in the first place. The city was well positioned, and remains so, to move from an early-twentieth-century industrial economy to a more modern one, thanks to its transportation infrastructure, its access to financial markets across the Hudson, and its cost advantages over expensive New York. Indeed, just as Newark was declining, Fortune 500 firms were beginning their march out of highly taxed Gotham to New Jersey. Many avoided Newark, however, settling first in the suburbs and later in revived urban settings like Jersey City and Hoboken. "The unrealized potential of Newark is tragic," noted economic development czar Pryor when he first came to the city.

Booker has been able to attract a number of high-profile firms to Newark. Some, like Amazon.com-owned Audible.com, which brought more than 200 workers from suburban Wayne in 2006, see the city as an emerging trendy environment, with evocative architecture from its industrial years. "I was intrigued by what's happening in Newark," says founder Don Katz. Since then, he says, his company has become progressively more "Newark-centric," with about 30 of its workers now living in the city. "I'm surprised more companies haven't woken up to what's happening here. It's a matter of time," Katz adds.

Newark also retains a far more vibrant blue-collar economy than do many faded manufacturing cities. The city is a crucial hub for domestic and international transport, a sector of the economy that has added workers since the 1970s, when Newark's airport expanded. In fact, the airport was one of the nation's fastest-growing even as the city's decline continued. But few of the new blue-collar jobs have gone to Newarkers. Booker has tried to reverse the hiring calculus by persuading more airport employers to hire city residents. He's lobbied Continental Airlines, one of Newark's biggest employers, to hold more job fairs in the city and says that a quarter of the airline's new hires at Newark Airport now come from the city itself, up from only 8 percent in 2006. In addition, big employers like Pitney Bowes have opened up shop in the city lately. "We have 180 workers in a new facility a mile from the airport," says Robert DiVincenzo, president of international mail services for Pitney Bowes. "We committed to hiring new workers by looking at Newark residents. This is a great location for us."

As for Detroit, it remains a gateway to Canada and the Great Lakes region, and its airport is one of the nation's busiest. Despite the years of decline, the city boasts what development experts call a "meds and eds" economy—that is, major health-care and research institutions like Henry Ford Hospital and important universities like Wayne State. Detroit also has a rich infrastructure and architectural legacy from its glory days, including numerous art-deco commercial towers. Many of them were abandoned over the years but still stand, such as the hauntingly beautiful old Michigan Central Station and the Book Tower.

And the upside of the city's population decline is that affordable office space and homes are plentiful, even in well-occupied portions of the city. "Detroit has the opportunity to make itself attractive to young professionals who work at its universities and are drawn to urban living, and to immigrants, who now make up just 5 percent of the population," says Lou Glazer, president

SARAH SIMONIS/STAR LEDGER/CORBIS

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Since Booker became mayor, shootings are down nearly 50 percent and murders by about a third, but budget cuts have forced him to shrink the number of new police recruits.

of Michigan Future, Inc., an economic development group. "Mayor Bing can make a difference by making government more business-friendly."

he urban-reform movement of the 1990s made its greatest inroads in cities that had retained a middle class and boasted a signature industry, like Wall Street in New York, to form the basis for revival. Newark and Detroit are in another category altogether, having suffered from decades of mismanagement that squandered billions of dollars in federal and state aid, delivered terrible services to those residents who remained in the city, and ensured that those who fled wouldn't come back.

Today, the two cities finally have mayors who understand the urban achievements of the 1990s and are imitating them. Reform in the twenty-first century may come slowly to Newark and Detroit, and it may well require the work of several successive mayors. Even in their own cities, Booker's and Bing's efforts may remain controversial, as the recent defeat of Washington, D.C. mayor Adrian Fenty, a strong school-reform proponent, shows. But the two mayors have made a promising start.

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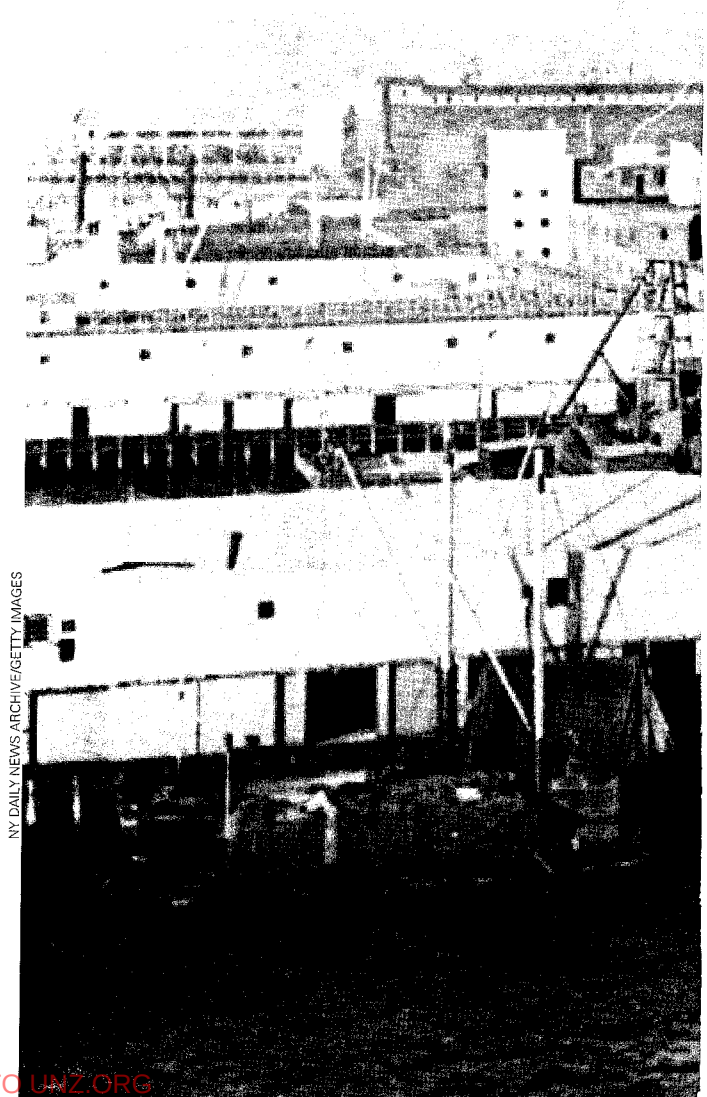
Start-Up City

Entrepreneurs are the heroes of New York's past and the key to its future.

Edward L. Glaeser

Like the rest of America, New York City has been buffeted by the recession that began in December 2007. This past August, the city's unemployment rate stood at 9.6 percent, just over the national rate of 9.5. But New York's economy will never recover from the downturn by trying to compete with China's labor costs or with Houston's housing costs. Nor can the city continue to rely on finance, which came to dominate it over the last 40 years: as the sad history of Detroit illustrates, one-industry towns rarely succeed in the long run. Rather, New York's success will depend on its ability to produce a steady stream of new products and ideas.

Indeed, studies have shown that all over the country, entrepreneurship—along with January temperature and education—is one of the three great predictors of urban success. But nowhere is that more the case than in Gotham, whose very history is a tale of entrepreneurship. To survive, New York must continue to bring forth innovators who will reinvent the city—with luck, making it more economically diverse. If they succeed, it will change as much between 2010 and 2050 as it did between 1970 and today.



NY DAILY NEWS ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

The Brooklyn refinery of the company that became Domino Sugar, launched in the early nineteenth century by visionary businessman William Havemeyer

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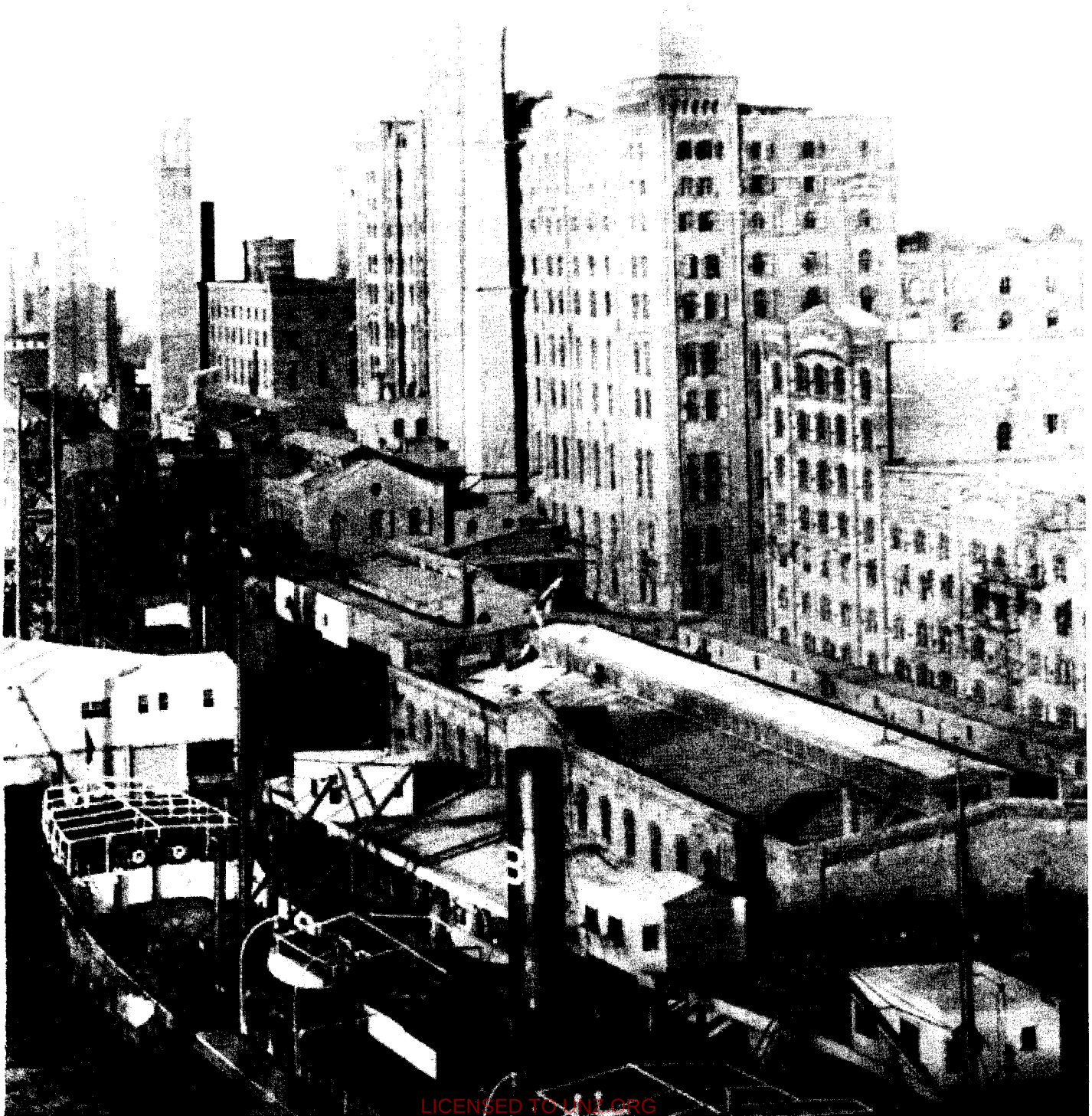

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Entrepreneurs have played a key role in every stage of New York's development. During the early nineteenth century, when waterways were the lifelines of commerce, New York owed its expanding sea trade partly to natural advantages: a safe, centrally located harbor and a deep river that cut far into the American hinterland. But those advantages became important because of the vision and energy of entrepreneurs like Jeremiah Thompson, the gambling Quaker. Thompson immigrated to New York at 17 to work in the American branch of his family's wool business. By the 1820s, he had established himself as America's largest importer of English clothing, its largest exporter of raw cotton, and its third-largest issuer of bills of exchange.

As a global trader, Thompson was acutely aware of the shortcomings of the transatlantic ships of the time, which would stay in port until their hulls were filled with goods. (Imagine showing up at LaGuardia and having to sit around until the airline sold enough tickets to fill the entire flight to Frankfurt.) Thompson saw an opening and created the Black Ball packet line, whose ships set sail on a scheduled day every month, no matter how light their cargoes were. His innovation was a gamble, since sometimes his ships sailed with relatively empty hulls, which meant less income from the merchants who bought the space. But a virtuous circle developed: fixed schedules attracted more cargo, and more cargo made ships sailing on fixed schedules more profitable. Once Thompson was turning a profit, other packet lines, like the Yellow Ball and Swallowtail lines, entered the market. An 1827 letter to the *New England Palladium* described the significance of Thompson's invention: "I consider Commerce by lines of ships, on fixed days, an invention of the age nearly as important as Steam Navigation and in its results as beneficial to New York, which has chiefly adopted it, as the Grand [Erie] Canal."

Thanks to such innovation, the city grew great during the first half of the nineteenth century, its population rising from 33,000 in 1790 to 814,000 on the eve of the Civil War. In 1821, New York's exports, measured in dollars, were less than 10 percent higher than Boston's. By 1860, New York was exporting over 700 percent more than the city on the Charles.

The surging harbor traffic was important to the city not only directly but also because of the business that sprang up around the port. New York's three largest nineteenth-century industries—sugar refining, apparel manufacturing, and printing—all benefited from the ships coming into the harbor. Again, the rise of these industries did reflect the city's innate advantages. Sugar refining thrived, for example, because New York was the natural hub of the triangular trade that connected the northern colonies with European manufacturers and markets and with southern sugar, tobacco, and cotton farmers. Since so much sugar was already flowing into New York's harbor, it made sense to refine sugar nearby. By 1860, 18 of America's 39 sugar refineries were in New York.

But New York wouldn't have become America's sugar capital without risk-taking entrepreneurs. In the mid-eighteenth century, Isaac Roosevelt, Franklin Delano's great-great-grandfather, started refining sugar near Wall Street. He was taking a substantial risk—sugar refineries were big factories for their time—but his investment paid off. Roosevelt later became president of the Bank of New York and a New York state assemblyman. Some suggest that the Roosevelt interest in politics began because Isaac didn't like British sugar policies.

Roosevelt's success foreshadowed the even more remarkable path of German immigrant William Havemeyer. Havemeyer learned the sugar trade in London and came to New York in 1799 to manage a sugar house on Pine Street, carrying a bill of exchange drawn on Isaac Roosevelt's sugar-refining son. Havemeyer eventually broke away to form his own enormously successful firm, which his descendants would rename Domino Sugar.

As sugar refining increased in scale, it stopped being an entry point for entrepreneurs (just as the automobile industry, once a great cluster of innovators, eventually became a model of economic sterility). Luckily, New York's port attracted the apparel business, which became the city's largest industry for over a century, employing hundreds of thousands of workers,

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK/GETTY IMAGES

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Gotham's garment industry was the springboard for thousands of small-scale entrepreneurs, . . .

many of them immigrants. It also allowed thousands of small-scale entrepreneurs to get started, sewing blouses at home or selling door-to-door. After World War II, in fact, the garment industry was the biggest industrial cluster in the country, employing far more workers than Detroit's automobile producers did.

A. E. Lefcourt was one of the many early-twentieth-century entrepreneurs who emerged from the garment trade. Lefcourt was born poor and started work as a teenage newsboy and bootblack. Even after he got a job in the garment industry, he continued selling papers in the morning and shining shoes in the evening, saving enough to buy a $1,000 Treasury bond, which he kept pinned to his shirt. When Lefcourt was 25, his employer decided to retire. Lefcourt borrowed to the hilt to buy the firm and built it up over the next decade, to the point where it was doing $2 million a year in sales (more than $40 million in current currency). He also played a major part in ending the "Great Revolt" of 1910, in which 60,000 garment workers went on strike. Lefcourt, still in his early thirties, led the management side of the battle and helped negotiate the so-called Protocol of Peace.

That summer, at the same time that he was bargaining with the labor unions, Lefcourt began a new career as a real-estate developer. He sank all his capital into a 12-story loft building on West 25th Street that would house his own firm. He then built more and helped move the apparel industry from the old sweatshops into the modern Garment District. Soon he branched out into other kinds of structures, erecting 31 edifices, many of them skyscrapers, over the next 20 years. The *Wall Street Journal* wrote that he "demolished more historical structures in New York City than any other man dared to contemplate."

By 1928, Lefcourt's real-estate wealth was estimated at $100 million, making him a billionaire in today's dollars. He celebrated by opening a

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national bank bearing his own name. Unfazed by the stock-market crash, Lefcourt planned $50 million of construction for 1930, sure that it would be a "great building year." Overoptimism seems almost a necessary ingredient in entrepreneurship, and this time Lefcourt was wrong. He died in 1932 with an estate worth only $2,500 but with a phenomenal physical legacy, including the Lefcourt Colonial Building, the Essex House (now the Jumeirah Essex House), and his most famous structure, the Brill Building, whose name came to stand for an entire musical style.

Fifty years ago, the economist Benjamin Chinitz used the apparel industry to compare New York City, which then seemed like a model of small-scale entrepreneurship, with Pittsburgh, a city of massive steel companies. "My feeling is that you do not breed as many entrepreneurs per capita in families allied with steel as you do in families allied with apparel," Chinitz wrote. "The son of a salaried executive is less likely to be sensitive to opportunities wholly unrelated to his father's field than the son of an independent entrepreneur." Few economists would use the word "breed" today, but Chinitz's hypothesis remains legitimate: a vast industry of small-scale entrepreneurs leads to the development of entrepreneurial skills, which are used in other industries and also passed along to children.

In the 1960s, the garment industry—that great incubator of entrepreneurship—left New York. Between 1968 and 1975, the city lost 400,000 manufacturing jobs. Steady improvements in transportation technology had made the advantages associated with ports and rail yards obsolete. Why sew on 28th Street when you could do it more cheaply in a right-to-work state or in China? Social distress and political mismanagement only compounded the city's problems. New York, like all of America's older, colder places, seemed headed for perpetual decline.

But entrepreneurship saved the city once again, this time in the financial sector. Wall Street had been relatively quiescent for 25 years after the 1929 crash: the Depression had dampened the public's taste for risk, and a growing web of regulation restricted innovation in the securities industry, for good and for ill. The securities industry was also facing the threat of an antitrust case that was dismissed only in 1954—the same year that the Dow Jones Industrial Average finally passed its precrash peak. During the 1950s, Wall Street did experience a bull market, but finance was still dominated by blue-chip firms like Morgan Stanley, hardly a model of entrepreneurship. Regulations, along with fear, kept banking conservative.

Gradually, in the 1960s, at least three distinct trends—the rise of mathematical finance, the democratization and globalization of investment, and the breakdown of old social barriers—made finance in New York considerably more entrepreneurial. A more sophisticated approach to risk and return began with academics in the 1940s and eventually arrived on Wall Street in the form of tools that could price new assets, like options, and assess whether older investments were priced appropriately. This more sophisticated approach to risk and return enabled the young Michael Milken to argue that junk bonds looked cheap, relative to their historical risk. His breakthrough made it easier for other financial entrepreneurs, like Henry Kravis, to finance acquisitions. It may seem, after the recent crash, that the quantitative approach to finance was a mistake; but the mistake was not using the tools but overusing them and putting far too much faith in them.

Kravis also benefited from ever-more-connected capital markets, which let him access capital from far-flung investors, like pension funds in Oregon. Other entrepreneurs, like Charles Merrill, worked to increase the number of people who invested in Wall Street. The number of Americans who owned securities rose from 12.5 million in 1960 to 32 million in 1972.

This swelling sea of funding helped erode the old social barriers that had once bound Wall Street. Back when New York was smaller and more closed, a small set of connected financiers had lent only to people whom they knew personally. J. P. Morgan himself told Congress in 1912 that character was everything: "A man I do not trust could not get money from me on all the bonds in Christendom." By all accounts, Morgan's ghost still roamed the halls when his

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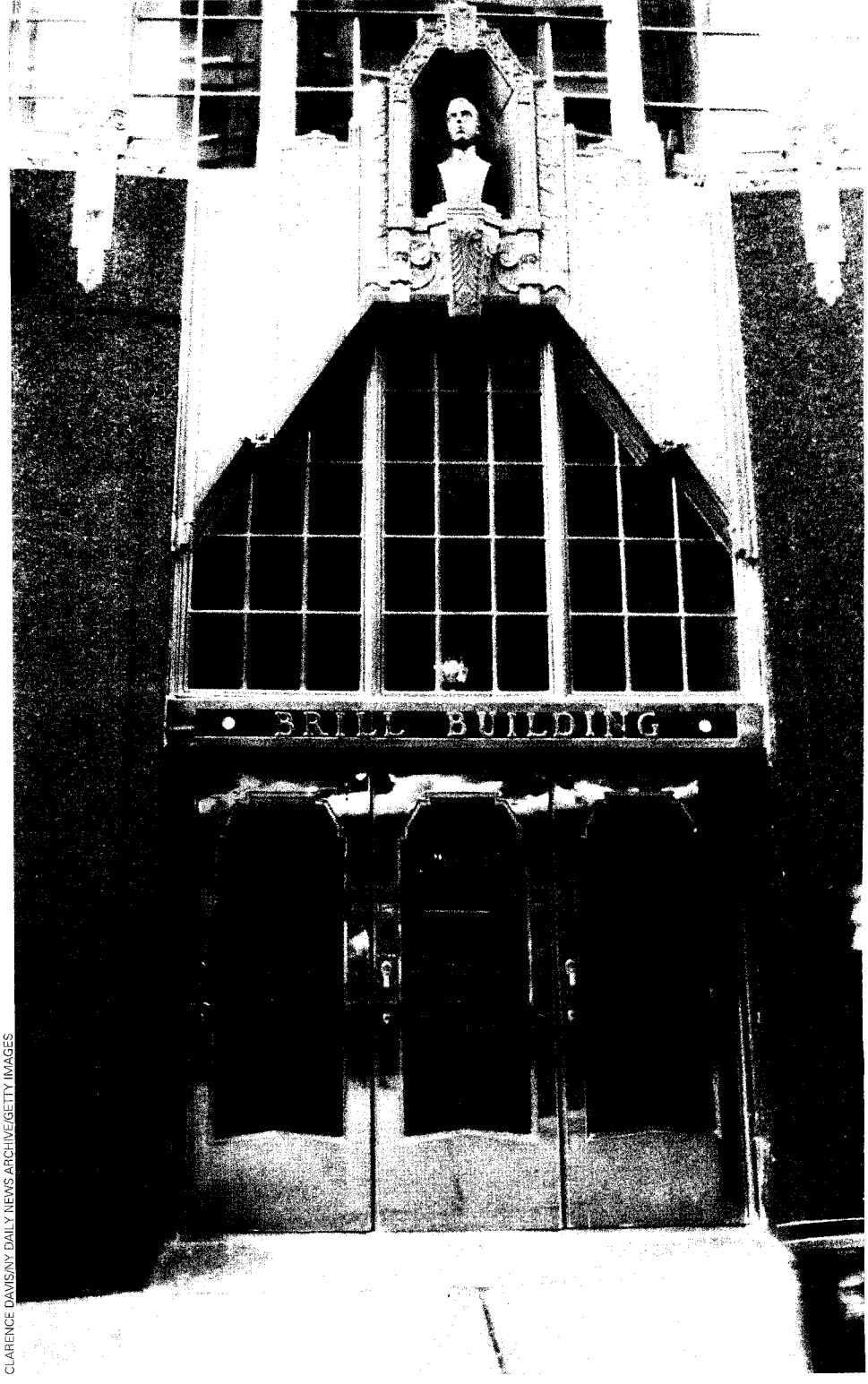
grandson ran Morgan Stanley in the 1950s. But by the 1970s, New York was full of outsiders finding financing regardless of their backgrounds.

In fact, the great mergers-and-acquisitions wave that began in the 1970s was led by entrepreneurial outsiders who were figuring out how to get value by borrowing vast sums and taking over sleepy, underperforming firms. Carl Icahn, T. Boone Pickens, Saul Steinberg, Irv "the Liquidator" Jacobs, and many others had never been part of the Wall Street establishment, but their acquisitions made plenty of money for Wall Street. Lewis Ranieri worked his way up from the mailroom at Salomon Brothers to lead the mortgage-backed securities market that moved trillions of dollars of housing-related assets from banks' balance sheets to investors throughout the world. In the wake of the crash, again, one can reasonably debate the value of these financial innovations, but for New York, the jobs, earnings, and philanthropy that they produced were long a source of civic strength.



CLARENCE DAVIS/NY DAILY NEWS ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

. . . such as A. E. Lefcourt, who became a real-estate magnate and built many Manhattan landmarks, among them the Brill Building.

New York isn't unusual in depending on its entrepreneurs. All over the country, urban growth depends upon urban entrepreneurship—though measuring that entrepreneurship is easier said than done. There are at least three plausible, widely available statistical measures of entrepreneurial activity: average firm size, the entry rate of new unaffiliated establishments, and the self-employment rate. Average firm size distinguishes between places like Detroit, dominated by a few large employers, and places like Brooklyn, with an abundance of smaller, nimbler firms. The smaller a city's average firm, the thinking goes, the more entrepreneurial the city. The

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entry rate of new unaffiliated establishments, probably the most direct measure of entrepreneurial activity, refers to the percentage of employees in a metropolitan area who are working in new firms that don't share ownership with preexisting ones. As for the self-employment rate, it is a considerably less popular measure among economists, since it doesn't capture many important forms of entrepreneurship—hedge-fund managers, for example, rarely work for themselves—and is swamped by very modest entrepreneurs.

None of the three measures is a perfect barometer of that hard-to-define quantity that we call entrepreneurship. But the good news is that all three usually move together. That is, places with smaller firms tend to have a high entry rate of new unaffiliated establishments, and they also tend to have high self-employment rates. The three measures suggest that levels of entrepreneurship differ substantially across regions of the country. For example, according to the 2000 census, average company size in counties with more than 200,000 people ranged from fewer than ten people (in Pasco County, Florida) to almost 30 (in Suffolk County, Massachusetts, which includes Boston).

What's more interesting—in fact, remarkable—is how well these measures of entrepreneurship predict the subsequent success of metropolitan areas. Between 1977 and 2007, the American counties with the smallest firms enjoyed employment growth of 150 percent; employment growth in the counties with the biggest firms was one-third of that (see the chart on page 33). Similarly, as an area's share of employment in recently formed companies rose, employment growth rose as well. In both cases, the impact on payroll growth was almost the same as the impact on employment growth. Entrepreneurial cities are successful cities.

An obvious objection to that claim is that perhaps it shows merely correlation, not causation. That is, perhaps certain areas have attributes—the weather, the regulatory climate, and so on—that both attract entrepreneurs and engender growth, which could explain why the two occur together. While it's impossible to reject that hypothesis completely, several pieces of evidence argue against it. For one thing, even after controlling for a wide range of local characteristics, the correlation between the entrepreneurship measures and subsequent growth remains strong. For another, the relationship between entrepreneurship and growth works even *within* cities. Together with William Kerr and Giacomo Ponzetto, I've studied sectors within cities and shown that those with smaller firms (or more start-ups) tend to have faster employment growth—and that wouldn't be the case if the connection between entrepreneurship and growth merely reflected, say, the weather.

With this knowledge about entrepreneurship in mind, we can start to understand some of the perils that New York faces today. The enormous expansion of finance allowed Gotham to recover from its 1970s crisis, but it also made the city heavily dependent on a single industry. By 2008, more than 40 percent of Manhattan's payroll came from finance. Not only has this industry come to dominate the island; it is itself dominated by relatively big firms. Portfolio management, hedge funds, and mutual funds are the most entrepreneurial parts of the sector, at least as measured by average firm size, but they employ only 12 percent of financial workers in Manhattan. Far more are found in commercial banking (average firm size, 67) and securities brokerage (58). All in all, the average financial-services establishment in Manhattan has 39 employees, about three times the national average.

These firms may not be General Motors–size, but they are awfully big. Thanks partly to them, the average size of a Manhattan company is 19.7 people—higher than 87 percent of counties with more than 200,000 residents. And the track record of cities dominated by single industries and big firms—think Detroit—is not good. Further, New York's financial sector owes part of its continuing strength to the extraordinary federal interventions that saved so many big banks. That isn't comforting, either, since heavily subsidized sectors often become heavily regulated sectors where innovation doesn't happen.

Note, too, that New York's hold on its financial entrepreneurs seems weaker than in the past.

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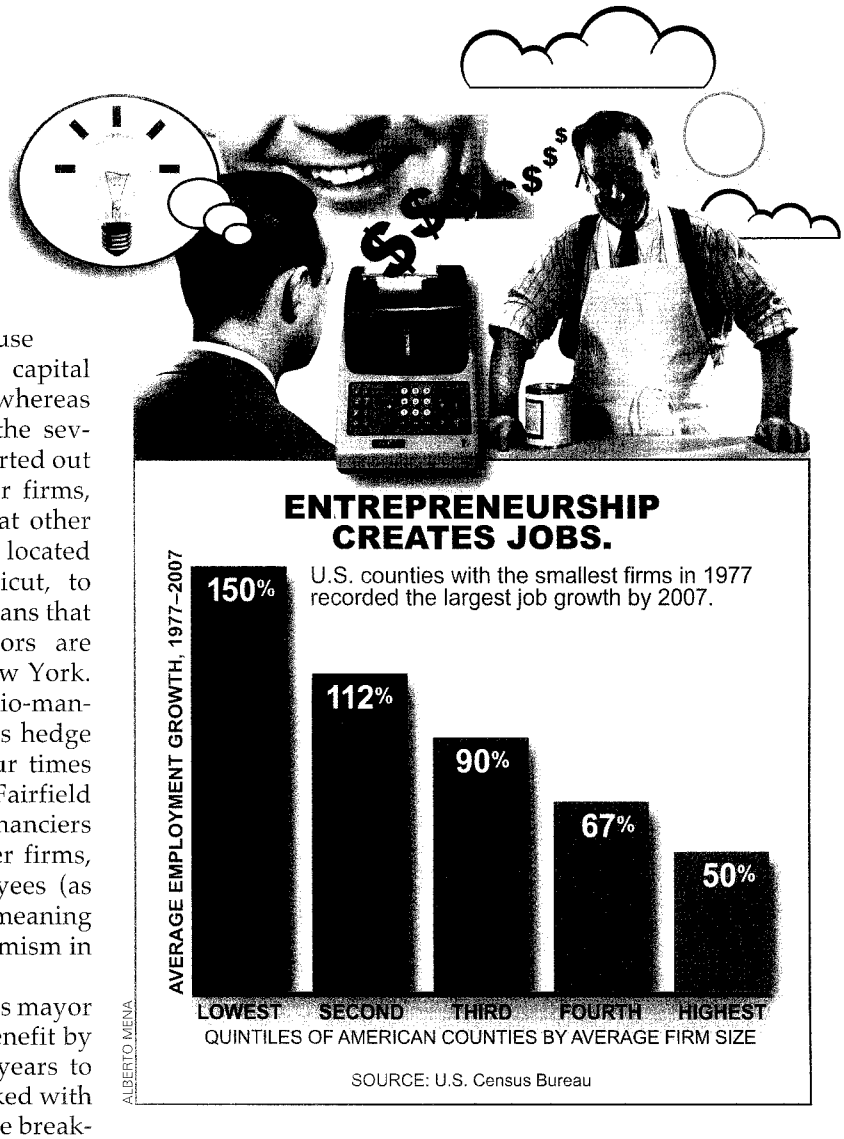
Over the past 30 years, the most successful financial entrepreneurs have been managers of hedge funds, which are attractive because they are relatively free of regulatory supervision and because compensation is treated as capital gains rather than income. But whereas hedge-fund entrepreneurs in the seventies and eighties typically started out as traders or analysts at larger firms, today they begin by working at other hedge funds—many of them located in Fairfield County, Connecticut, to avoid New York taxes. That means that tomorrow's financial innovators are likely to be located outside New York. True, as of 2007, the portfolio-management sector (which includes hedge funds) was still more than four times larger in Manhattan than in Fairfield County. Yet the Fairfield financiers earn more and work in smaller firms, with an average of 17 employees (as opposed to 23 in Manhattan), meaning that there may be greater dynamism in the suburbs.



Even the career of New York's mayor suggests that the city would benefit by being less finance-focused in years to come. Michael Bloomberg worked with Lewis Ranieri at Salomon before breaking away to start a firm that manufactured data terminals for traders. As his success illustrates, some of the most important forms of entrepreneurship occur when knowledge from one industry (in this case, Bloomberg's understanding of traders' data needs) makes its way to another (the production of data terminals). For such intellectual cross-fertilization to take place, a city must have many different industries, not a single behemoth.

On a more positive note, Manhattan is one of the unusual places where the three measures of entrepreneurship *don't* move in sync. Though its companies, again, are large, its self-employment rate is 9.5 percent—quite high, compared with the national rate of 6.5 percent. Also, in the mid-1990s, the New York area ranked third in the Northeast in the share of its workers laboring in start-ups. (We don't have that statistic for more recent years.) And even the size of an average firm varies by location within New York City: in Brooklyn, it's just 10.9 people, suggesting that entrepreneurship may be shifting to the less expensive outer boroughs. So even in a city increasingly dominated by the big firms of a single sector, there may be plenty of entrepreneurship left.

an public policy encourage entrepreneurship? In New York, the primary agency for

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doing so is the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), which can issue tax-exempt bonds to pay for development and industrial projects. It can also offer firms tax exemptions and loans, and it oversees a great deal of public space where companies may wish to locate.

Since Adam Smith, however, economists have been skeptical about the government's ability to micromanage business growth. Twenty years ago, in the flush of Japanese economic expansion, America saw a vogue for Japanese industrial policy, which consisted of aggressively supporting particular firms through a Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI). But when researchers actually examined MITI, they found that it picked losers: the firms that the ministry backed did worse than the ones that proceeded on their own. That MITI was staffed with the best and brightest of Japan stands as a warning to any government that wants to play venture capitalist. Many have concluded that the wiser course for government is to develop a good environment for business, not to play favorites.

While I generally concur with this conclusion, an entity like the NYCEDC is nevertheless valuable. Its existence helps signal that New York cares about economic development. Since so many public agencies care about other things, it is surely good to have at least one public entity focused on the needs of business. Plus, it would seem foolish to throw away the ability to raise money for economic development with tax-exempt bonds. The world might well be a better place if no city gave out firm-specific deals to attract big companies, but so long as Atlanta, Chicago, and Dallas are bidding on businesses, it's hard to argue that New York should take the high road. Important new research by MIT's Michael Greenstone and Berkeley's Enrico Moretti suggests that areas that win bidding contests for million-dollar plants receive substantial benefits. Finally, New York City owns a lot of property, and someone needs to manage it.

But the NYCEDC's ability to foster entrepreneurship will always be limited. Important entrepreneurship is unpredictable and hard to create from the top. Tax exemptions work best with large plants, not small, hard-to-evaluate new firms. Indeed, one worry about providing public support for large employers is that they crowd out the smaller ones that are more likely to be long-term engines of growth. For smaller firms—the real entrepreneurs—a city's overall business climate is more likely to matter than any particular economic-development policy.

And in New York, anyone trying to make the business climate friendlier—freer of taxes and regulations—confronts a Herculean labor. New York City imposes an income tax on its earners and a corporate tax on its businesses (on top of state taxes). Property taxes are also high. There is no easy answer to this problem. New York City's infrastructure will always be expensive; the taxes needed to finance it will always make the city less attractive to many firms. (The silver lining is that many entrepreneurs earn little during early stages, making them relatively immune to most income-related taxes.)

But regulations, another substantial deterrent to entrepreneurship, may be easier to fix. New York City has a long history of overregulating small businesses (see "Small Businesses to NYC: Get Off Our Backs!," Autumn 2009), and though regulatory environments are typically evaluated at the level of states, not cities, most evaluations suggest that New York State is a particularly bad place to do business. When CNBC graded states "on the perceived 'friendliness' of their legal and regulatory frameworks to business," New York came in 42nd. *Chief Executive* polled CEOs about the best and worst states for taxation and regulation, and New York State got a D-minus, worse than any state except California and Massachusetts. The Pacific Research Institute ranked New York 50th on its economic-freedom index, as did George Mason University's Mercatus Center. The one outlier is *Forbes*, which put New York in the middle of the pack in its rankings of best states for business—but when the magazine ranked large metropolitan areas, it put New York City dead last.

If Gotham wants to attract entrepreneurs, changing its stifling regulatory climate—particularly rules that make it difficult to open new

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businesses—would be a good place to start. Zoning rules, sharply limiting the activities that can be pursued in different parts of the city, also hinder entrepreneurship by driving up real-estate prices, and hence the cost of doing business, in those parts where entrepreneurial activities *are* allowed. Manhattan's barriers to building, long among the country's highest, are another reason for its astronomical rents. Lowering these barriers—for example, shrinking the largest historical-preservation districts—would lower real-estate costs and help the city become more entrepreneurial (see "Preservation Follies," Spring 2010).

Fifty years ago, Jane Jacobs correctly pointed out that "only operations that are well established, high-turnover, standardized or heavily subsidized" could afford expensive real estate but incorrectly argued that preserving old buildings would encourage the entrepreneurs who needed cheap space to rent. The truth is that restricting urban change makes space more, not less, expensive, limiting the space that could make the city both more affordable and more entrepreneurial. The way to keep prices down is to build more.

If Gotham wants to attract entrepreneurs, changing its regulatory climate would be a good place to start.

Since important innovation is inherently unpredictable, the best economic-development policy may be to attract entrepreneurial people and get out of their way. But what attracts entrepreneurial people? Jed Kolko, Albert Saiz, and I have created an "amenity index" for American metropolitan areas by comparing property values with income levels. The idea is that places that are expensive, relative to their wages, must have something else going for them, or people wouldn't choose to live there. You can think of this "something else" as quality of life, broadly construed to include not simply bicycle paths and a music scene, as urbanist Richard Florida would have it, but more important things like weather, education, and public safety. There is a strong positive relationship between this quality-of-life variable and entrepreneurial activity, as measured by smaller firms or by employment growth in new start-ups. That's because productive, entrepreneurial people like pleasant environments.

This means that entrepreneurship in New York depends, in part, on policies that seem to have little to do with entrepreneurship. The increasing safety of New York's streets, which did so much to make the city more pleasant, was also an economic-development strategy (see "New York's Indispensable Institution," in *City Journal*'s 2009 special issue, "New York's Tomorrow"). And there may be no more important element in New York City's quality of life than its schools. Education, at all levels, enhances entrepreneurial success because good schools attract skilled parents and create a skilled workforce. A large literature shows the role that universities play in generating innovations that help the firms that surround them. New York can survive, despite its taxes and regulations, only by being smart, and stronger schools help make that happen.

Great American cities were never built by their governments; the true heart of a city is the entrepreneurial energy that it contains. That rule applies especially strongly to New York, a city that will never be a good place for firms that want to stand still and produce as cheaply as possible. Rather, New York's survival hinges on coming up with new ideas and new businesses. For centuries, Gotham thrived on the entrepreneurial energy of people like Jeremiah Thompson and A. E. Lefcourt. The task ahead is to ensure that it remains a place where new ideas can blossom and where new businesses can start.

Research for this article was supported by the Brunie Fund for New York Journalism.

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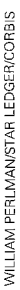
Why Big Cities Matter More than Ever

Seven reasons


WILLIAM PERLMAN/STAR LEDGER/CORBIS

Mario Polèse

The information revolution, we used to hear, would break the shackles of geography and make cities irrelevant. Thanks to e-mail, the Internet, and an ever-widening array of technological devices, you would be able to work just as effectively in South Podunk as in the Big Apple. A new, post-metropolitan era would open in which creative and flexible firms could locate their operations anywhere. The age of the big city would come to an end.

But that hasn't happened. Big cities have continued to grow. In rich nations today, urbanization levels are on the order of 80 percent or higher. China and India are urbanizing at breakneck speed, with Shanghai and Bombay racing each other to become the world's largest metropolitan area and eclipse Tokyo (currently 33 million strong). Why is it that cities have lost none of their powers of attraction, despite the new freedom that information technology brings individuals and firms? The economic advantages of cities—of urban "agglomeration," in the language of the people who study these things—are difficult to measure precisely and not the same for all firms. But they are quite real, and we can capture them in what I call the Seven Pillars of Agglomeration.

Let's start with the most basic pillar, one that has historically supported the great manufacturing economies of big cities: *economies of scale in production*. That is, as the scale of production increases, unit costs fall. That basic rule of economics makes it profitable for firms to manufacture goods in just a few large factories, rather than in many smaller ones. And if you're going to have just one or two big plants, it makes sense to locate them where you can

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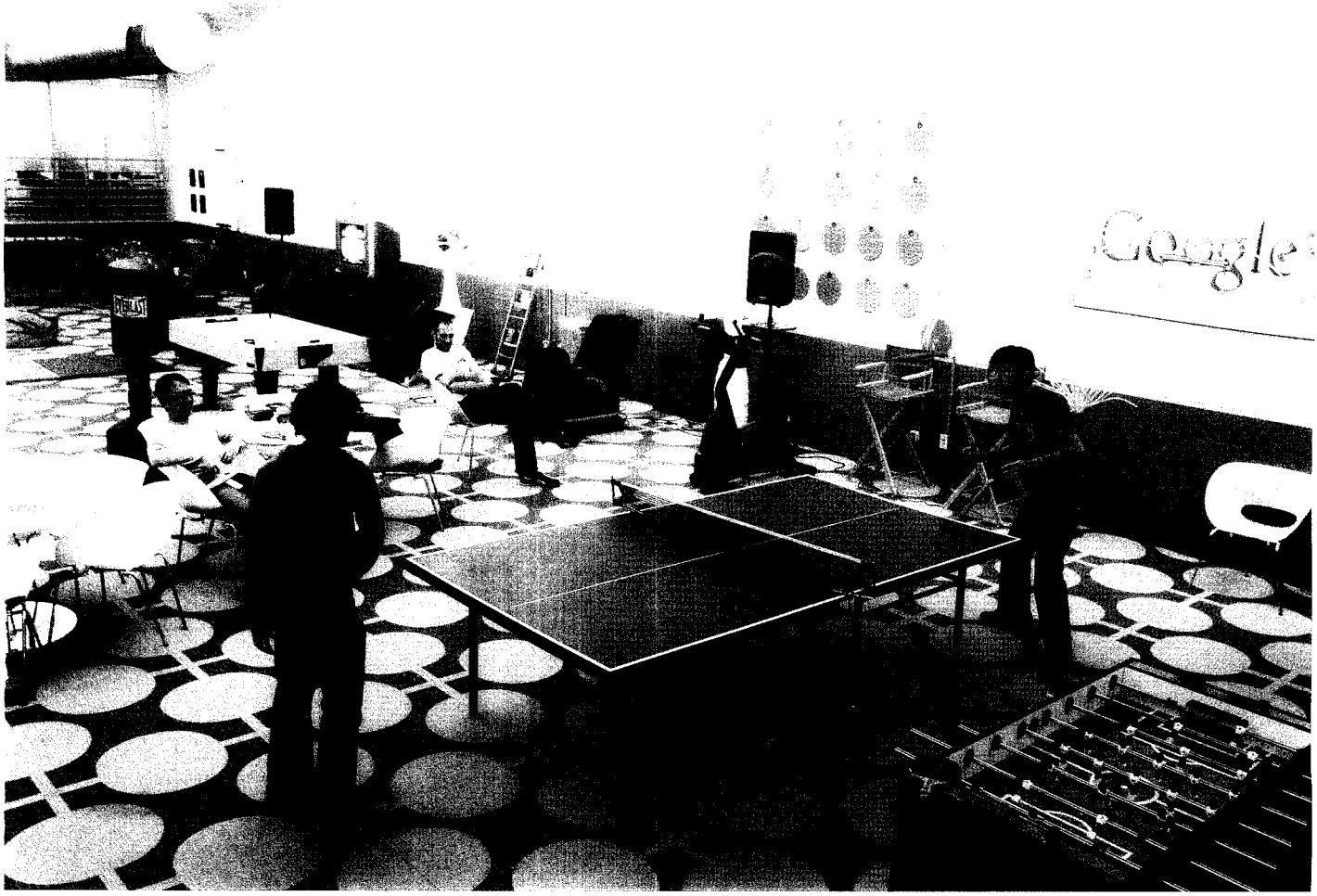

California-based Google opened a Manhattan branch to tap the city's pool of creative workers.

find a lot of workers: densely packed urban areas. This logic explains the growth of large manufacturing cities like Detroit in the earlier part of the twentieth century. Nowadays, though, it applies most readily to midsize cities, because real estate in larger cities often costs too much to build big factories (see the sidebar on the next page).

The second pillar, however, tends to push firms back to larger cities: *economies of scale in trade and transportation*. Just as larger factories lead to lower unit costs by making manufacturing more efficient, fully loading a truck, an airplane, or a cargo ship leads to lower unit costs by making delivery more efficient. And filling up those trucks, planes, and ships—both coming *and* going—is generally easier if they're delivering to the largest ports, airports, and other distribution centers. That means the bigger urban areas.

Reinforcing this tendency is the third pillar of agglomeration: *falling transportation and communications costs*. Throughout history, transportation costs—not only monetary outlays but also lost time and the frustration that can come with trading with distant partners—have been a barrier to market expansion. It follows that a fall in transportation costs will stimulate trade, enabling the lowest-cost producers to improve market share. And the steeper the drop in transportation costs and the greater the weight of scale economies in production, the greater the potential for centralizing production in one or two places. Henry Ford could locate automobile production in Detroit because paved roads and railways allowed him to reach the entire American market.

Indeed, if scale economies are infinite and transportation costs are close to zero, *all* production will be centralized in one place, with the first (lucky) producer to have arrived on the scene. Such an extreme case probably doesn't exist in the real world, but the film industry comes close. Scale in the industry is vitally important, with its enormous sound studios and vast budgets. It costs little to ship a film—and even less if done electronically. The centralization of the film industry in Southern California is the result. With transportation costs removed as an economic factor, competitors had no way to match the scale economy that Hollywood had established early in the twentieth century.

What about the argument that falling communications costs actually undermine urban concentration? For example, didn't the existence

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of e-mail encourage Silicon Valley companies to outsource computer programming to Bangalore, India? The truth is that this shift did foster urban concentration—in Bangalore. Think of communications costs as tariffs: competition intensifies when they fall. If one city is already more efficient at producing a particular good and then the barriers are removed, that city's market share will expand accordingly.

The centralizing influence of technology is consistent with history. The advent of the telegraph—as revolutionary in its time as the Internet is today—not only failed to slow the growth of London and New York; it enabled financial firms and corporate offices in those cities to extend their reach. The arrival of radio and television in the twentieth century replaced a lot of locally produced entertainment with programs produced in New York or Los Angeles.

Scale economies are only part of the urban-expansion story. Most city dwellers work not in massive plants but in small and midsize firms in a wide array of industries: legal services, shirtmaking, financial counseling, and on and on. Why should these companies set up shop in cities? Pillar four—*the need for proximity with other firms in the same industry*—provides part of the answer.

Proximity brings numerous advantages. To name just one: face-to-face contacts remain essential for the most valuable and sensitive information. Finance, among the most spatially concentrated of industries, is an obvious example. Trust must be constantly renewed; millions of dollars will be committed based on a brief encounter. The greater the risks and sums involved, the greater the need for relationships built on something more than e-mail exchanges. Body language, facial expressions, and eye contact are among the signals that financial workers use to judge others.

Personal contact is also crucial in industries where creativity, inspiration, and imagination are vital inputs. For firms working in these rapidly evolving industries—high fashion, say, or computer graphics—the surest way to stay on top of the latest news is to locate near similar firms. The more that information can be transmitted electronically, it seems, the more valuable becomes information that cannot be so transmitted. Electronic and face-to-face communications tend to be complements; business travel, for example, has accelerated since the advent of the Internet. The more people communicate, the more they want to meet in the flesh.

Smaller Cities Matter, Too

Consider a remarkable fact: over the long run, the growth rates of American cities in various size groups tend to be about the same. That is, over the last century, the country's distribution of small, midsize, and big cities has remained stable. This stability intrigues economic geographers. Why aren't all cities converging toward one ideal size—whether large or small?

Part of the answer is that the attributes that make big cities attractive to some industries make them less attractive to others—and every industry gravitates to locations where its comparative costs are lowest. For example, providing environments for rapid, diverse, face-to-face contacts is a comparative advantage of big cities, while physical space is more readily available in smaller ones. If the demand for face-to-face contacts increases, real-estate and wage costs will rise in the largest cities, crowding out industries for which those costs carry—comparatively—less weight. We understand intuitively that Manhattan isn't a good location for manufacturing airplanes or laptops. But it's excellent for management consulting and producing operas. So urban systems have a self-regulating nature: certain industries emerge (or centralize) in the largest cities; others move to smaller ones.

So small cities, no less than large ones, fill an essential economic need. The more attractive big cities become for some industries, the more alluring small cities will be to others.

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Lower recruitment and training costs are additional advantages of proximity, particularly in highly specialized fields. A firm clearly benefits if it can hire from a pool of available workers with relevant training acquired at previous employers. The chances of finding a first-rate, experienced screenwriter will be a lot better in Los Angeles than in Baton Rouge.

Companies that require a wide array of talents, across a broad range of industries, will be drawn to big cities as well. Thus pillar five: *the advantages of diversity*. Consider advertising, a field whose products are constantly changing and come with no blueprint. Successful ad firms must rapidly assemble dizzying combinations of expertise and talent according to various clients' needs. Each ad campaign, after all, is unique: one may call for animation, another for symphonic music, a third for trained chimpanzees. Where better to find the necessary components than in big cities, with their myriad industry clusters? Of the world's top ten advertising agencies, it is no surprise that three are in New York, three in Tokyo, and two each in London and Paris. The entertainment industry, publishing, and many other fields feel the same pull.

Proximity brings advantages. Face-to-face contacts remain essential for the most valuable and sensitive information.

Firms—above all, general-service businesses, for which customer access is important—naturally want to locate in the geographic center of their markets, which brings us to pillar six: *the quest for the center*. What economic geographers call "centrality" varies by industry, however. For companies with low-scale economies—a gas station, for instance—a central location can simply be a busy street, where the potential number of customers driving by is sufficient to ensure profitability.

But the centrality principle also holds at the national and international levels, and it makes large urban agglomerations particularly appealing. The performing arts are a good example. Broadway, the largest cluster of theaters in America, is in New York City not only because of the sizable local population but also because of all the potential theatergoers within a manageable distance of the city. Greater Philadelphia, with more than 5 million residents, is a mere 90-minute drive away; and don't forget Gotham's many rail, air, and bus links to other cities (including distant ones), which bring in countless more potential theatergoers. Centrality is often a legacy of history. Paris, shaped by many centuries of investment in roads, rail, and other transportation modes converging on the capital, remains the undisputed center of the French market.

Finally, there's pillar seven: *buzz and bright lights*. Talented and ambitious people benefit from being in a big city, just as firms do—in part because the companies can hire talented and ambitious workers. Some people move to cities not just because they need to make a living (though being in a metropolis does offer all the advantages of a diverse labor market) but also because they want to be where the action is. Ambition, dreams, the need for recognition—all are powerful forces in human behavior. Many a young man or woman will ask: Where are my chances best of meeting the right people and doing exciting things? The answer, for good reason, will often be the big city. Why, indeed, are some people willing to spend small fortunes for apartments on Fifth Avenue or homes in Beverly Hills if not to feel that they are truly at the *center*?

Cities face many challenges in the coming years: municipal debt, onerous taxes, the cost of living, and crumbling infrastructure, among others. But whatever the genuine threats to urban prosperity, human contact is more important than ever in the age of information technology, and people will continue to seek places where they can share ideas, make transactions, and pursue their dreams. There's nowhere better to do these things than big cities.

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Cities from Scratch

A new path for development

Brandon Fuller and Paul Romer

In 1091, Count Roger of Sicily raided the island of Malta, then under the control of the Fatimid caliphate, and secured the release of Christian captives there. Rather than observing the customs of conquest and forcibly resettling the prisoners, he let them choose between returning to their homes (many were Greek) and taking up residence in Sicily. There, he promised, they would be free to work their land as tenants, unchained from the burdens typical of medieval enserfment, such as servile dues and obligatory labor in the lord's demesne.

Roger's effort to attract, rather than enserf, new residents was unusually progressive for the time, but historian Richard Bartlett claims that it became common as western Europe expanded during the High Middle Ages. By offering people rights and opportunities, nobles could quickly attract voluntary migrants to new settlements, raising the productivity of their land and earning commensurately higher rents. Migrants who chose to move to the new settlements could improve their status, gaining improved legal rights, hereditary tenure as rent payers, and temporary exemptions from rents and military duty while they cleared land and built houses.

A related start-up dynamic played a role in colonial America several centuries later. To settle a debt, King Charles II gave William Penn dominion over Pennsylvania, a territory named for Penn's father. The younger Penn was free to write the territory's charter—its constitution—and to experiment with the very ideas that made him unpopular in his rigidly Anglican homeland. Penn's charter provided one of the first legal guarantees of freedom of religion and was also the first constitution to allow for an amendment process. Because people valued religious freedom, the new charter attracted many new residents, and the city of Philadelphia grew rapidly.

Similarly, nineteenth-century settlements on the American frontier lured residents by experimenting with new rights and economic opportunities—particularly for free women, who secured a number of rights before their counterparts back east did. These included jury participation, the pursuit of higher education, and the ownership and management of property.

Today, human beings have an opportunity to re-create the frontier conditions that give people new and better options. What's more, we can do so without the use of conquest or coercion. If some societies are unable to establish rules that guarantee safety and job opportunities for their citizens, people should have the chance to opt in to places with better rules, as the Quakers could when they left Europe for Pennsylvania. A way forward would be to follow a modern version of Penn's example: using unoccupied land to charter new cities. These cities would compete for migrants; in fact, their leaders would have to design and enforce rules that made the cities attractive places, where people could find employment, send their children to school, and live without fear of violence, crime, and preventable illness.

The establishment of a charter city would involve three distinct roles that one or more

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Philadelphia's abundant freedoms, guaranteed by William Penn's distinctive Pennsylvania charter, helped make it a thriving city by 1778.

national governments could fulfill. A host country would provide land; a source country would provide residents; and a guarantor country would provide the assurance that the new city's charter would be respected and enforced. All three roles would be entirely voluntary. Only countries that wanted to charter new cities would free up the land to do so; only people who wanted to migrate there would do so, and they would remain free to leave at any time.

The ways in which these roles were filled could vary depending on the situation. For example, India—a country whose urban population will grow by 600 million over the next 40 years—is already starting new cities and assuming all three roles of host, source, and guarantor. China did much the same thing in establishing special economic zones, such as the one containing the city of Shenzhen, which has grown from roughly 30,000 people to 10 million in just a few decades. New cities are set for development in at least five Indian states. These cities will likely cater to high- and middle-income residents, but if India builds many more, developers and civic leaders will be forced to compete for the hundreds of millions of lower-income families that want to leave rural areas.

Unlike India, however, many governments—particularly those with a history of political instability—cannot credibly commit to the long-term security of prospective residents. Further, these governments have a hard time convincing potential firms and investors that their investments would be safe from regulatory takings. Even reform-minded leaders may not be persuasive: Who knows whether future leaders would adhere to their reforms?

But political risk needn't stand in the way of creating better choices for the world's urban migrants. Suppose the government of a less developed country wants to start a new coastal city. That government could fill the roles of host and source, providing a city-size piece of uninhabited land and giving its citizens, and perhaps those from neighboring countries, the option of moving there. Then the government could partner with another country—or a group of countries—that would serve as guarantor. The guarantor country would ensure that the newly chartered city's rules were respected and enforced. It would also promise objective, neutral

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enforcement of contracts between the host government and foreign investors.

Such guarantees for investors would be particularly important because foreign investment could play a huge part in the growth of new cities. A great advantage of charter cities is their freedom to choose rules that would be very difficult for the entire host country to adopt. New rules could generate beneficial competition by allowing private firms to participate—along with, or instead of, public agencies—in the construction, maintenance, and even operation of city infrastructure, such as electrical grids, streets, mass transit, and airports. Take the provision of safe water: global companies would jump at the chance to earn a decades-long stream of income from regulated user fees; those fees, meanwhile, would be cheaper than the often exorbitant prices that slum dwellers pay for clean water. Because an effective guarantor can ensure that all sides stick to the deals that they negotiate in the beginning, direct investment from private infrastructure developers could speed the growth of new cities and generate large gains for everyone.

The biggest threat to a newly chartered city would be weak governance, which could fail to stop the kind of investor holdup or regulatory taking that can slowly kill a project. Abuse of monopoly power by infrastructure providers, use of regulatory authority to extract bribes or weaken competition, political collusion with organized criminals, and tax evasion—infractions like these may seem petty, but they can stunt the growth of a new city and keep people from realizing the feasible gains from cooperation. The guarantor must provide a neutral legal system that sends clear and public signals when these violations occur. Such signals can deter bad behavior simply by holding firms, the host government, and city authorities accountable. Public arbitration in such a system can also reduce the possibility of conflicts that might otherwise lead to armed confrontation between city authorities and the host government.

Despite the importance of the guarantor in ensuring respect for the rule of law, charter city residents would carry out the majority of administrative activities. Think of the African country of Mauritius, which uses the Privy Council in the United Kingdom as its final court of appeal. That doesn't mean that Britons carry out the day-to-day administration of law and order in Mauritius; it simply means that Mauritius makes use of Britain's external credibility.

While international firms that collect fees for their services could provide much of a new city's infrastructure, the city's development authority would still have to finance certain public services—police, firefighting, border security, regulatory agencies, and courts, for instance. Many cities rely on income, consumption, or property taxes to fund such operations. But charter cities might employ an interesting alternative: making long-term leases to private developers. The leases would contain mechanisms that adjusted rent upward as land values rose. This arrangement wouldn't merely provide income for the city government; it would also give that government a strong incentive to keep the city an attractive place to live and work because its revenues would depend directly on the value of the land.

After a time, the residents of the charter city and the citizens of the host country might vote on whether to return the city to the control of the host government. An agreement might stipulate that the city's charter remain in effect after the host government assumed control. But without a reunification proposal accepted by both sides, the existing arrangement would remain in force.

During the twenty-first century, more urbanization will take place than during all of human history. Both the global population and the fraction of it living in cities will reach their peaks, as 3 billion to 5 billion people join the 3 billion who already call cities home. That staggering urban growth will be strongest in the developing world. If the existing cities there simply grow by accretion, many people will end up in dangerous slums.

But this doesn't have to be the century of the slum. It could, instead, be the century of the city. By starting cities with rules that create more opportunities for people to improve their lives, the world can reshape the arc of urbanization and the future of human development.

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The Sidewalks of San Francisco

Can the City by the Bay reclaim public space from aggressive vagrants?

Heather Mac Donald

The homelessness industry has pulled off some impressive feats of rebranding over the years—most notably, turning street vagrancy into a consequence of unaffordable housing, rather than of addiction and mental illness. But for sheer audacity, nothing tops the alchemy that homelessness advocates and their government sponsors are currently attempting in San Francisco. The sidewalks of the Haight-Ashbury district have been colonized by aggressive, migratory youths who travel up and down the West Coast panhandling for drug and booze money. Homelessness, Inc. is trying to portray these voluntary vagabonds as the latest victims of inadequate government housing programs, hoping to defeat an ordinance against sitting and lying on public sidewalks that the Haight community has generated.

The outcome of the industry's rebranding campaign—and of the Haight's competing effort to restore order—will be known this November, when San Franciscans vote on the proposed sit-lie law. That vote will reveal whether San Francisco is ready to join the many other cities that view civilized public space as essential to urban life.

our filthy targets of Homelessness, Inc.'s current relabeling effort sprawl across the sidewalk on Haight Street, accosting pedestrians. "Can you spare some change and shit? Will you take me home with you?" Cory, a slender, dark-haired young man from Ventura, California, cockily asks passersby. "Dude, do you have any food?" His two female companions, Zombie and Eeyore, swig from a bottle of pricey Tejava tea and pass a smoke while lying on a blanket surrounded by a fortress of backpacks, bedrolls, and scrawled

Illustrations by Arnold Roth

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signs asking for money. Vincent, a fourth "traveler," as the Haight Street punks call themselves, stares dully into space. All four sport bandannas around their necks—to ward off freight-train exhaust as they pass through tunnels, they explain—as well as biker's gloves and a large assortment of tattoos and metal hardware. The girls wear necklaces and bracelets of plastic disks and other hip found objects; their baggy tank tops and stockings are stylishly torn.

A petite Asian woman passes the group and smilingly hands Cory the remains of a submarine sandwich. Suddenly, all four are on their feet, tearing at the sub. As Zombie stuffs the bread into her mouth, partly chewed chunks fall back out onto the ground.

Such juvenile hobos see themselves as on a "mission," though they're hard-pressed to define it. Sometimes they follow rock bands, and other times more mysterious imperatives, between Seattle, Portland, Santa Cruz, Berkeley, Venice Beach, and San Diego. Some are runaways; some are college dropouts; others are years older. Eeyore says she got kicked out of her Riverside, California, home at 14 because she was "a punk and an asshole."

Of all the destinations on the "traveler" circuit, the Haight carries a particular attraction to the young panhandlers, thanks to the Summer of Love. Starting in late 1965, waves of teens from across the country began pouring into what was then a ramshackle, blue-collar neighborhood of pastel Victorian houses and low-rent businesses, drawn to the emergent drug culture and its promised liberation from the bourgeois values of self-discipline and hard work. "The time has come to be free," a local flyer proclaimed. "Be FREE. Do your thing. Be what you are. Do it. Now." This insipid philosophy was eventually co-opted by consumer capitalism, while the hippie ethos gave way to punk, daisy chains to piercing, acid to meth, and mindless utopianism to mindless nihilism. In the Haight itself, national chain stores like American Apparel, McDonald's, and Ben & Jerry's found a place next to the head shops, tie-dye boutiques, and check-cashing outlets. But the kids kept coming.

The defining characteristic of all these "travelers" seems to be an acute sense of entitlement. "If you can afford this shit on Haight Street, then goddamn, you can probably afford to kick down $20 [to a panhandler] and it won't fucking hurt your wallet," a smooth-faced blond boy from Spartanburg, South Carolina, defiantly tells the camera in *The Haight Street Kids*, a documentary by Stanford University's art department. I ask the group on the blanket: Why should people give you money? "They got a dollar and I don't," Cory replies. Why don't you work? "We do work," retorts Eeyore. "I carry around this heavy backpack. We wake up at 7 AM and work all day. It's hard work." She's referring to begging and drinking. She adds judiciously: "Okay, my liver hates me, but I like the idea of street performance. We're trying to get a dollar for beer." More specifically, they're aiming for two Millers and a Colt 45 at the moment, explains Zombie. Aren't you embarrassed to be begging? "I'm not begging, I'm just asking for money," Cory says, seemingly convinced of the difference. How much do you make? "In San Francisco, you don't get much—maybe $30 to $40 a day," says Eeyore. "When you're traveling, you can make about $100 on freeway off-ramps."

What more conventional people consider "employment" is, in the eyes of the street punk, something conferred gratuitously. "People see you, they're like, 'Get a job.' You're like, 'Okay, pay me, hire me. You know, *do* something!'" a boy complains on a promotional video made by Larkin Street Youth Services, a local organization that serves "homeless" youth. Meantime, welfare will do just fine. A strapping young redhead trudging down Haight Street with a bedroll and a large backpack explains the convenience of his electronic food-stamp card, which he can use to pick up his benefits wherever he happens to be—whether in Eugene, Oregon, where he started his freight-train route last Halloween, or in California.

Over the last several years, the Haight's vagrant population has grown more territorial and violent, residents and merchants say. Pit bulls are a frequent fashion accessory, threatening and sometimes injuring passersby. In July, two pit bulls bred by the residents of an encampment in nearby Golden Gate Park tore into three pedestrians, biting a 71-year-old woman to the

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bone and wounding her two companions. In October 2009, one of three punks sitting on a blanket with dogs spat on a 14-month-old baby when its mother rejected their demand for change. The vagrants carry knives and Mace; people who ask them to move risk getting jumped.

Merchants trying to clean up feces and urine left by the alcohol-besotted youth are sometimes harassed and attacked. Kent Uyehara, the proprietor of a skateboard shop in the Haight, has gotten into fistfights with vagrants when he tells them that they can't sell marijuana in front of his store. "They start it, but if they say 'F you,' we're going to say 'F you' back," he says matter-of-factly. Business owners, already struggling to stay afloat in the weak economy, worry that shoppers will avoid their stores or the entire neighborhood, rather than navigate around packs of drunken youths on the sidewalk.

By late 2009, community frustration with the gutter punks' rising aggressiveness had led the Haight's police captain, Teri Barrett, to propose a new law that would ban sitting or lying on city sidewalks from 7 AM to 11 PM. Under current policies, an officer can ask someone sprawled across a sidewalk to move only if he observes a pedestrian being substantially obstructed *and* if that pedestrian will sign a complaint and testify in court

Trouble in the Tenderloin

Police officers in the Tenderloin are as eager for a sit-lie law as their colleagues in the Haight are. The Tenderloin is the smallest police precinct in the city, but it has the highest number of parolees and sex offenders and the highest rate of violent crime. It's also right next to Union Square, San Francisco's central tourist area. Tourists walking through the Tenderloin to its few remaining theaters have been mugged; those waiting for the cable car at the bottom of Powell Street are routinely accosted by panhandlers. The city's persistent failure to dent the disorder has kept the area, along with the adjacent Market Street Corridor, in thrall to crime and blight for years, as have strict laws protecting single-room-occupancy buildings from acquisition and development. Police officials and local entrepreneurs speak wistfully of the transformation of New York's Times Square, and they still hope that something similar could happen here.

Whereas street sitters in the Haight are usually engaged in various forms of consumption, many in the Tenderloin are in sales. Asked how he would use the proposed sit-lie ordinance, Officer Adam Green responds, "I'd ask these ladies to move on," referring to a group of women sitting on folding chairs on the sidewalk. Green's "ladies" are most likely holding drugs for the dealers milling around a few paces down the block. "It's a very sophisticated game," Green explains. "They know it's harder for us to search women. We try to prevent people from congregating, because that's when we get our drive-by shootings." (A few weeks later, an Oakland man wearing body armor was gunned down in the Tenderloin in a cascade of 16 bullets, saved from death only by his foresight in putting on his bulletproof vest before entering the area.) Other sidewalk sitters serve as lookouts against the cops.

Green and his partner, Officer Ed Saenz, recognize some of the dealers waiting for customers down the street from an arrest they made yesterday. "That guy in the blue hat was giving us a lot of lip. It would also be nice if people actually went to jail without being immediately released."

A second category of Tenderloin sidewalk occupants represents what the Haight kids will become if they continue their "traveling" lifestyle. A middle-aged woman with bright red hair and smeared lipstick, a leopard-skin jacket, green-painted nails, and red-and-black striped stockings is passed out on the sidewalk, behind a miniature pyramid of nine Milk Duds. Saenz radios for an ambulance while Green grabs her ear. "Wake up, Kelly!

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against the sidewalk sprawler. Few pedestrians are willing to do so; as for the merchants themselves, they fear retaliation. After the manager of a boutique selling "Goth" clothing installed outdoor cameras and called the police about the vagrants outside her store, the vagrants threw live birds, their wings flapping wildly, in a cashier's face.

Barrett's proposed ordinance against sidewalk colonization would remove the current requirement of a civilian victim and allow a police officer to take action on his own. The officer would first have to warn someone sitting or lying on a sidewalk that he was violating the law; only if that person refused to move could the officer issue a citation against him.

Both Mayor Gavin Newsom and San Francisco's new police chief have endorsed the proposed law, later named "Civil Sidewalks." It is similar to ordinances adopted in Seattle, Berkeley, Portland, Santa Cruz, and Palo Alto, all cities with impeccable "progressive" credentials. The police have issued few citations under those laws; as in San Francisco, their main purpose is to give officers the authority to ask squatters to move along and to prevent the hostile occupation of public space.

he homelessness industry instantly mobilized against the Civil Sidewalks law. Its first tactic was

How much did you drink today?" After prolonged shaking, she rouses herself, grimacing and shaking her head: "Just a little bitty one." "She's got caramel tunnel syndrome," the officers joke, referring to the candy used by alcoholics to prevent their blood sugar from dropping precipitously. Allowed to sit on the sidewalk all day, alcoholics like Kelly often become victims of robbery and assault when they doze off.

A reed-thin black man with a grizzled beard and sore-infested legs barely manages to sit upright on the curb in front of Kelly. He's far from his usual post at Union Square, the officers note. They had given him a citation a few hours earlier for drinking in public, which the Coalition on Homelessness will make sure is dismissed in court; now his inebriation has progressed even further. A fire truck drives up to take the two drunks to the city's free detox center; 80 percent of the fire department's runs are devoted to picking up drunks or providing other emergency services, at huge taxpayer expense. Sometimes the officers themselves provide the rides to the detox center or a hospital. "We're like paramedics," observes Green. "C'mon, Joe, your ride's here," Saenz says encouragingly. "Give it your best!"

Though the police fervently hope that under the data-driven policing of Chief George Gascón, the Tenderloin will show the same capacity for renewal as Manhattan's once crime-ridden neighborhoods, parts of San Francisco's populace seem as indifferent to violent crime as they are to public disorder. In August 2010, a German schoolteacher visiting San Francisco to celebrate her wedding anniversary and 50th birthday was killed in crossfire outside a dance party in the Tenderloin, a block from her hotel. The public reaction to the shooting was strangely muted, probably in part because of political correctness and the sense that the victims in these periodic club shootings are usually other gangbangers. Perhaps, too, such public passivity in the face of crime owes to the city's lack of a tabloid newspaper; in New York, such grisly events, which were common in the early 1990s, sparked widespread outrage in no small part because papers like the *New York Post* made them front-page news.

Whatever the reason, a proposed Starbucks or other chain store in a favorite neighborhood seems to provoke more organized indignation among affluent San Franciscans than a random killing. This hierarchy of concern may partly explain why San Francisco's violent crime rate was higher than that of Los Angeles or New York in 2008.

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to assimilate the gutter punks into the "homelessness" paradigm, so that they could be slotted into the industry's road-tested narrative about the casualties of a heartless free-market economy. "Homelessness, at its core, is an economic issue," intoned the Coalition on Homelessness, San Francisco's most powerful homelessness advocacy group, in a report criticizing the proposed law. "People are homeless because they cannot afford rent." Even applied to the wizened shopping-cart pushers of the traditional "homeless" population, this simplistic statement is deeply misleading. But applied to the able-bodied Haight vagrants, it is simply ludicrous, entailing a cascading series of misrepresentations regarding the role of choice in youth street culture. The Haight punks may not be able to afford rent, but that is because they choose to do no work and mooch off those who do. Further, they are not *looking* for housing. They have no intention of settling down in San Francisco or anywhere else. The affordability or unaffordability of rent is thus irrelevant to their condition.

Shoehorning the street kids into the homeless category requires ignoring their own "voices," ordinarily a big no-no among "progressives" when it comes to official victims of capitalism and other oppressions. They are not homeless, the "travelers" insist, and they look down on those who are. "When you stop traveling and stay on the street, you become a home bum," Eeyore says. A stringy, middle-aged alcoholic buzzes around Eeyore and her companions' blanket, offering incoherent sallies. Asked if the older guy is an acquaintance, Cory scoffs, "He's just some crazy that wandered up," in between more pitches for food and change.

If the "travelers" feel no affinity for the white winos of the Haight and Golden Gate Park, they keep themselves even farther from the largely black street population of the Tenderloin, a drug-infested downtown neighborhood of single-room-occupancy buildings that is San Francisco's other major locus of public disorder (see the sidebar on page 46). "I don't hang out in the Tenderloin because I don't feel like smoking crack," Cory says primly. Such scruples suggest a keen sense of self-preservation, notes Kent Uyehara. "These kids couldn't handle the Tenderloin," he says. "The local drug dealers won't tolerate hippie punks interrupting their operations; they'd get beaten up or shot."

An unintentionally hilarious letter to the *San Francisco Chronicle* in January 2010 revealed just why the homelessness-industrial complex is so desperate to claim the Haight infestation for itself: government contracts. "The majority of the youth on the streets and in the park are in the Haight seeking support to address the issues that have led them there," wrote the executive director of Larkin Street Youth Services in criticizing the sit-lie proposal. "Funding to help these youths through outreach, case management, education and employment has been severely cut over the past two years. . . . Rather than rallying in anger, a better use of our time is to focus on helping youths exit the streets so they can find work and housing and become contributing members of the community." Translation: Homelessness, Inc. wants more money.

Larkin Street's analysis of why people hang out in the Haight is as wildly inaccurate as the Coalition's fingering of unaffordable rent. Few, if any, of these vagrants are "in the Haight seeking support to address the issues that have led them there," unless "support" means money for booze and drugs. To the contrary, the "youth" are there to party, en route to their next way station. As a platinum blonde boozily announces in *The Haight Street Kids*: "I love this city, love your fucking life." A tall youth draped around her adds: "It's awesome for traveling kids to stop in when they need a break."

Predictably, the offer of services and housing—which San Francisco's round-the-clock outreach workers constantly put before the Haight Street vagrants—is usually turned down. As for becoming "contributing members of the community," that's definitely not on the agenda, either. Asked what he saw for himself in the future, a "traveler" in the Stanford documentary rolls his eyes, smiles nervously, and shakes his head for nearly a minute before replying: "A hot dog, there's definitely a hot dog in my future."

But a social-services empire has grown up around the street vagrants; its members' livelihood depends on a large putative "client" population, even if the clients aren't interested in their services. Enforcing laws designed to ensure safe

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and accessible public spaces is the most effective means of changing behavior, which is why the sit-lie law is such a threat to Homelessness, Inc. San Francisco has poured billions of dollars into nonprofit groups and subsidized housing over nearly three decades; the street population perceptibly wanes and becomes less aggressive only during those intermittent periods when the city summons the will to enforce common norms of public behavior.

In March, Santa Cruz's mayor testified to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors (San Francisco's version of a city council) about Santa Cruz's own sit-lie law. The ordinance had a "major impact on making sidewalks passable," Mayor Mike Rotkin said, by "sending a message that it was not acceptable to claim turf and live on the sidewalk all day." After years of ineffectual social-services spending, Santa Cruz's vagrant youth population started acting more civilly a mere couple of weeks after the ordinance passed. Such results are why San Francisco's advocates must prevent these instructive experiments in law enforcement from happening in the first place.

The Haight punks may not be able to afford rent, but that is because they choose to do no work and mooch off those who do.

he homelessness industry's second tactic was to demonize Civil Sidewalks supporters as motivated by hatred toward the poor. "This issue makes me sick to my stomach," the head of the Coalition on Homelessness, Jennifer Friedenbach, told a supervisors' meeting in May. "It makes me sick because we're putting into place another law that promotes hatred and that will codify economic profiling. Giving tickets for being destitute is not what a civilized society engages in." Mary Howe, executive director of the Homeless Youth Alliance, a needle-exchange program in the Haight, testified at the same hearing that it was "disgusting that there was not more compassion where there is not enough affordable housing."

Needless to say, the sit-lie law says nothing about economic status; what it "profiles" is not wealth but behavior. The Haight Street vagrants colonize the sidewalk all day not because they are poor but because doing so is the essence of their "traveling" lifestyle. And a resident or store owner afflicted by punks threatening passersby in front of his home or business is indifferent to how much money is in their pockets; he's even indifferent to the constant panhandling. He only wants a passageway open and welcoming to all. "I don't care if they ask for change," says Arthur Evans, a self-described former hippie from Greenwich Village who has lived in the neighborhood for 35 years. "It's okay if they loiter and make a bit of noise. But I don't feel safe walking down the Haight at night any more."

The statement from the Homeless Youth Alliance's director about "affordable housing" is the usual non sequitur: the gutter punks are not looking for housing, whether temporary or permanent. Every night, about 100 beds in the city's shelter system remain vacant, though outreach workers are always trying to get people to use them. As for permanent housing, you're not going to be able to afford rent at any level if you opt out of working or studying. And while some of the street colonists may come from truly impoverished backgrounds—though such a fact is irrelevant to the validity of the proposed law—others do not. Two blondes in "The Haight Street Interviews," a YouTube video, explain that they "got to escape the whole private school mentality" by starting to follow punk bands in seventh grade.

inally, the homelessness advocates pulled out their trump card: associating supporters of the Civil Sidewalks law with "business interests." San Francisco "progressives" regard businessmen as aliens within the body politic whose main function is to provide an inexhaustible well of funds to transfer to the city's social-services empire. If it weren't for vigilant politicians, however, the

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interlopers would constantly seek to duck this ever-growing civic obligation. "If these corporations pay their fair share," supervisor John Avalos explained in 2009 when introducing a new business tax, "we can generate millions that will go towards keeping health clinics, youth and senior services, and jobs safe for San Franciscans." (The contradiction between raising business taxes and keeping jobs safe was lost on Avalos.)

So the sit-lie opponents portrayed the law as the brainchild of the rapacious profit seekers, even though the Haight's residents were as instrumental in its genesis as local merchants were. "I've heard we should pander to business," a member of the Coalition on Homelessness told the supervisors in May. "To that I say: San Francisco is not a theme park for tourists. If they want a squeaky-clean world, they should go to Six Flags and pay for the privilege." Tourists who can't get by someone on the sidewalk, she continued, "need to develop some spine and say 'excuse me.'" (Those on the sidewalk can't be expected to say "excuse me" for blocking everyone else.)

Such cluelessness about the challenges of creating a business and staying afloat is typical of advocates everywhere, as is the aristocratic assumption that San Franciscans will always enjoy an endless supply of tourist dollars, no matter the street conditions. What makes San Francisco unique is that so many of its elected officials have just as limited an understanding of civil society. And no one embodies this contempt for the private sector more than supervisor Chris Daly, a youthful-looking former activist now representing the Tenderloin.

Daly's signature blend of pomposity and childishness was on full display in the May hearing on the sit-lie law, during which he condescended to an assistant chief of police, the mayor's public-safety advisor, a small-business owner, and the Chamber of Commerce. He fulfilled the spirit, if not the letter, of his January pledge to use the f-word at every board meeting, a tradition for which he had already laid ample groundwork during past foulmouthed public tantrums. "You can sugarcoat shit, but that doesn't make it ice cream," he said, in reference to the proposed law. But his most distinguishing touch was to see the law as all about himself and his fellow "progressives." In Daly's fantasy narrative, the bill's real purpose was to unseat the board's progressive bloc by creating a "wedge issue" that would mobilize moderate and conservative voters in the November election. The desire of residents and proprietors across the city for passable, open public spaces, in Daly's view, was a front orchestrated by the nefarious Chamber of Commerce. Maintaining this story line, for which no shred of evidence exists, required Daly to dismiss the testimony of mothers worried about walking their children to school and of struggling managers who told of losing customers unwilling to navigate the human mess in front of their stores.

The unexpected twists and turns of Daly's monologues, not to mention their length, may put a listener in mind of a certain obsolete Caribbean dictator. In the middle of his opening harangue against the sit-lie law, he interjected, for no apparent reason: "My name is Chris Daly. I'm a homeless advocate." Having caught everyone's attention with this oddly timed piece of information, he went on: "I was elected ten years ago talking about affordable housing and I'm still talking about it. We're lying if we say that measures like this will get us there. We need radical changes in budget priorities. . . . We need to move money from the sacred cows of fire and police to housing and special needs."

Leaving aside the eternal irrelevance of "affordable housing" to the Haight gutter punks, the notion that San Francisco has been stiffing welfare spending in favor of fire and police is ludicrous. In the 2009 fiscal year, the city spent $175 million on homelessness, compared with a $442 million police budget. That's $26,865 in services for each of the city's 6,514 "homeless" persons, the majority of whom are housed in city-subsidized lodgings, compared with $52 per San Franciscan on police protection. (Including such indirect services for the homeless as paramedic calls and psychiatric services for inmates would bring the per-capita rate much higher.) The rest of San Francisco's massive social-services spending, including health care and welfare, was nearly $3 billion in 2009, compared with a combined police and fire budget of $720 million. (The

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fire department could, in any case, be considered part of the city's service empire, since most of its runs are for non-fire-related emergency services, often for passed-out vagrants.)

The weirdest argument against the sit-lie law marshaled by Daly and his allies at the May supervisors' meeting was that the new measure was not even necessary, since the police already had the legal authority to move people along who were sitting on the sidewalk. Why the police would go to the trouble of seeking a new ordinance when they could just use an existing one was never explained—nor was the incongruity of the progressives' arguing for the existence and use of a power that they fiercely oppose.

At issue in the supervisors' odd claim is the requirement of a civilian complainant under the existing law. Police officials and city attorneys testified that under the current ordinance, judges would not entertain a prosecution unless a civilian victim of sidewalk obstruction had done the unlikely and come forward. (And as Santa Cruz's mayor had testified in the supervisors' earlier meeting, quality-of-life laws requiring third-party complainants are "completely ineffective.") Daly and fellow supervisors David Campos and Ross Mirkarimi, however, hammered city witnesses on the fact that the current sidewalk obstruction law does not *explicitly* state that a civilian victim and complainant is needed. True, but the courts have inferred that requirement in interpreting the statute—and judicial practice is just as controlling an authority.

The progressives' obsessive statutory nitpicking deflects attention from certain key but unstated facts. First, the board's leftists seem not to understand—or else simply reject—the concept of public order. Campos badgered an assistant police chief about his statement that the sit-lie law's purpose was to "protect neighborhood safety and vitality." Such an idea apparently flummoxed Campos: "What exactly do you mean by 'neighborhood vitality'? What conduct hurts it?" he asked. One trip to the Haight should be enough to answer that question. Campos then took up the hairsplitting strategy: "Activities when you are standing up can also hurt 'neighborhood vitality.' So what is the conduct you are trying to stop?" The fact that a law does not target all negative behavior does not mean that stopping *some* negative behavior is illegitimate. San Francisco does not hesitate to ban discrimination against gays just because other groups might independently face discrimination.

Second, the progressives reject Broken Windows theory—the idea that an environment where low-level offenses are pervasive is likely to breed higher-level offenses—notwithstanding the universal experience of law enforcement officials that allowing people to flout public norms and to take over public space all day, often drinking, leads to more serious crimes.

The supervisors voted in June against the sit-lie law eight to three, though the public had backed it by a 71 to 24 percent margin in an earlier 2010 poll. (In the Haight itself, support for the law, though strong, is not unanimous: one merchant has called for a boycott of businesses that endorse the measure, which he sees as the advance wedge of "gentrification.") The supervisors' vote reflects both a recent change and longer-term trends in San Francisco's politics and culture.

Since 2000, San Francisco has held district elections for supervisors, replacing the traditional citywide franchise. It now takes fewer votes and a far smaller campaign chest to get elected; local nonprofit social-services groups and unions man get-out-the-vote drives that easily push their preferred candidates into city hall. The resulting boards have made even their liberal 1990s predecessors look moderate (though those earlier boards were as much a product of Mayor Willie Brown's vacancy appointments as they were of at-large elections). Developers "bleed money to non-profits of the supervisors' choosing," according to the *San Francisco Weekly*. During budget negotiations in 2009, the board used a barely legal maneuver to restore cut funds to specific social-services groups in their districts, including one that provided a festive "Ladies' Night" for prostitutes. This action violated the intent of a law that the supervisors fund only government departments, not specific nonprofit grantees, reported the *San Francisco Public Press*.

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The tight alliance between politicians and service providers within Homelessness, Inc. has not gone unnoticed by city residents. At the May hearing on the sit-lie law, a petite young black woman mocked the progressives' claim that they were "fighting for the [homeless] population." "You people in the social-service mafia make money off this population," she retorted, "and then go home to neighborhoods where people are not loitering, puking, and pissing outside your door 24 hours a day. We don't need you here; we need accountability for low-income residents who go to work and don't do drugs 24/7."

But the supervisors' contempt for the economic engine that makes government social-services spending possible also stems from changes in the city's political culture that long predate district elections. Hard as it is to believe today, San Francisco once understood that entrepreneurial energy was essential to urban vitality. After World War II, San Francisco aspired to rival Manhattan as a world-class center of finance and commerce, positioning itself as the gateway city to the Pacific Rim. A pro-growth coalition of mayors, downtown business leaders, and unions launched transportation and other development projects to create the conditions for economic opportunity, writes San Francisco State University professor Richard DeLeon in *Left Coast City*. Voters consistently defeated antidevelopment measures. In the late 1970s, refugees from New York's blackouts, crime, and budgetary disasters found in Frisco a city that still "knew how," in William Howard Taft's phrase.

By the mid-1980s, however, the pro-growth coalition had collapsed. The fatal pressures upon it included the loss of such longtime city fathers as industrialist J. D. Zellerbach and banker Charles Blyth, a backlash against the perceived overbuilding of downtown, and the emergence of a new white-collar population with the affluence to value lifestyle over economic growth, DeLeon observes. The passage in 1986 of the most restrictive antigrowth measure of any big city in the country marked the city's transformation. Henceforth, San Francisco would be characterized by a progressivism "concerned with consumption more than production [and] residence more than workplace," writes DeLeon—one that has inured itself to threats of private-sector disinvestment. The city's political elites also developed a taste for identity politics and useless symbolic gestures, especially regarding foreign policy. Public order and economic viability took a backseat to the rapid expansion of municipal unions and the government-subsidized social-services sector.

San Francisco once understood that entrepreneurial energy was essential to urban vitality.

The fate of various sit-lie ordinances over the years limns San Francisco's political evolution. In 1968, at high hippie tide, a unanimous board of supervisors passed a law banning sitting and lying on city streets and sidewalks. The board had no trouble understanding the Haight-Ashbury Merchants and Improvement Association's plea that "it's time that our sidewalks were free to walk again."

By 1994, however, Mayor Frank Jordan could not get a narrower sit-lie law past the board of supervisors or the voters (the ACLU had long since eviscerated the 1968 ordinance in the courts). Though the city was already spending $50 million on homeless services and $55 million on welfare for able-bodied single adults (many of whom chose to live on the street and spend their generous checks on drugs and booze rather than rent), the supervisors embraced the line that the proposed sit-lie law "criminalized poverty." Homelessness, Inc. was already a key player in San Francisco politics. After the supervisors rejected the sit-lie law, Jordan placed it on the ballot. In an election year of resurgent leftism that saw the loss of San Francisco's last Republican supervisor, voters were nevertheless much more narrowly divided on the measure than the board was, rejecting it by barely a 2 percent margin.

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Between 1994 and today, little permanent progress has been made in the public discourse regarding civil order. San Francisco seems doomed to repeat a one-step-forward-two-steps-back approach to the maintenance of safe and civil streets. Jordan, a former San Francisco police chief, had been elected in 1991 to clean up the city from the chaos tolerated by Mayor Art Agnos, a social worker and well-connected state assemblyman. Jordan crafted thoughtful initiatives that balanced assistance to vagrants with misdemeanor enforcement, an approach he dubbed "Matrix" (see "San Francisco Gets Tough with the Homeless," Autumn 1994).

The homelessness industry found a ready champion against Jordan in former California assembly speaker Willie Brown, one of the most charismatic and powerful politicians in recent California history. Brown promised that he would end Matrix if elected mayor, and upon taking office in 1996, he proved true to his word. Embracing the advocates' mantra that homelessness was a housing and welfare problem, Brown vowed to end it within 100 days. Instead, within less than a year, he had declared the problem unsolvable. "When I came into office I assumed that making services available would and could cause a reversal of the situation for most people on the streets," Brown said. "I was wrong. . . . There are some people who just don't want to live inside, and there's nothing you can do with them. They are the hobos of the world. They don't want help." As for Homelessness, Inc., Brown said that he would henceforth "ignore" the advocates. "They have their own political agenda," he observed. "They don't know what's going on" in the streets.

Throughout his eight years as mayor, Brown sporadically revived Jordan's quality-of-life law enforcement strategies, usually sub rosa, when the public clamor against needle-infested parkland or refuse-infested plazas grew too loud. The advocates denounced each short-lived initiative as the product of downtown business interests and lambasted Brown as a traitor. A 1996 effort in the Haight to reduce its vagrant youth population collapsed when the youth turned down the offered housing and jobs and the district attorney decided that he couldn't be bothered to prosecute the public-order arrests that the police were bringing in.

From the early 1990s to 2002, spending on vagrancy rose 50 percent, with nothing to show for it. Voters in 2002 rated homelessness as the city's most pressing problem, as they had for years and would continue to do throughout the decade. In another déjà-vu moment, then-supervisor Gavin Newsom, a restaurateur and Brown protégé, resuscitated one of Jordan's most innovative ideas: requiring single, able-bodied welfare recipients to use part of their welfare check for housing. Newsom took his proposed Care Not Cash program directly to the public, which voted it in by 60 percent in 2002. The usual machinations followed: a judge overturned the law, and the board then passed a rival, less demanding, measure sponsored by Chris Daly.

Newsom's revenge was to ride Care Not Cash into the mayor's office, winning the election in 2003 on his support for tough love. In 2004, the California Supreme Court reinstated Care Not Cash; since then, the number of homeless adults collecting cash welfare has dropped 86 percent. Newsom's reprise of the Jordan playbook continued with a ballot initiative to counter aggressive panhandling (since emasculated by the pro bono defense bar) and, after goading, support for the sit-lie law. Late last year, a Haight activist fighting for the Civil Sidewalks ordinance observed sarcastically to a local TV reporter that there had been more sightings of the late Jerry Garcia in the Haight than of Newsom, who lives on the tony hilltop a few blocks above the besieged street. Soon thereafter, Newsom publicly acknowledged the Haight disorder and embraced the Civil Sidewalks ordinance.

Perhaps the lock of Homelessness, Inc. on San Francisco's politics will be broken in November, when citizens will vote on the sit-lie law in a referendum. It is auspicious that the current push for civil sidewalks is coming from the Haight, long viewed as the epicenter of San Francisco's progressive movement. In 1987, antidevelopment radicals there burned down a Thrifty drugstore during construction. Mayor Agnos then refused to meet with Thrifty's president, a

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moment that epitomized the city's indifference to private enterprise and even the rule of law when it conflicted with the higher prerogatives of progressive political correctness. Now a majority of Haight residents are clamoring for surcease from the intimidation and lawlessness that Homelessness, Inc. declares is the price that a city must pay until every last tax dollar is turned over to itself.

Of course, a victory for the Civil Sidewalks law at the ballot box will not end the matter. San Franciscans have been voting for sensible order-maintenance policies for decades, only to see the supervisors and the courts thwart their will. But there are other hopeful signs of a possible sea change in the city's most counterproductive tendencies. The public defender, unabashedly left-wing on many matters, has put a wide-ranging public-pension-reform measure on the November ballot; a moderate supervisor has sponsored another ballot initiative to eliminate the most egregious transit-union protections. Both measures gleaned a record-breaking number of qualifying signatures, despite the city's traditional inclination to rubber-stamp the demands of municipal-service unions. However, if Newsom's current bid for California lieutenant governor is successful, which would allow the supervisors to appoint his replacement, all bets regarding the implementation of the sit-lie law are off.

Not relying on their possible king-making power, the progressives are fighting back against the sit-lie law at the ballot box. Supervisor Mirkarimi, who represents the Haight, has authored an initiative requiring the police department to engage in "community policing"—specifically, foot patrols—in an effort to draw votes from the sit-lie measure. Mirkarimi, who has pushed foot patrols for years as a foil to what he disparagingly calls "L.A.-style policing," claims that mandating more cops on the beat will resolve whatever disorder problems the Haight may face, thus obviating the need for an allegedly rights-trampling measure like the sit-lie law. If the intention behind Mirkarimi's measure was not clear enough, board of supervisors president David Chiu has added an amendment to it, holding that if the foot-patrol initiative wins with a larger majority than the sit-lie law, out goes the sit-lie law.

The idea that the supervisors have the expertise to dictate police deployment and strategy is laughable, as police chief George Gascón has said. It is also dangerous, since Mirkarimi's foot-patrol requirement could interfere with the department's ability to deploy officers to the city's highest-crime areas, even as Gascón's data-driven policing—"L.A.-style policing," in fact—is just kicking in. But the foot-patrol measure also fails as an alternative to the sit-lie law, since officers walking the beat lack the authority to do anything about the disorder they confront, absent a cooperating victim.

San Franciscans have been voting for sensible policies for decades, only to see the supervisors and courts thwart their will.

an Francisco's magical topography has allowed it to indulge in antiurban policies for decades. Even as sector after sector of its economic base has peeled off under the pressure of high taxes, ignorant regulations, and government-inflated housing costs, tourists have kept pumping billions into the city's coffers. Homelessness, Inc. could disparage these visitors, as well as the workers and entrepreneurs who tried to meet their needs, confident that the bay, the islands, the light, and the city's unique architecture would keep the tourist tax dollars—$21.5 million a day in 2009—pouring down.

Such self-indulgence is particularly foolish in a recession. But the sit-lie law is about more than business viability, however important such viability is to a city's lifeblood and energy. It is also about the most basic rules of civilized society, which hold that public spaces should be shared by the public, not monopolized by the disorderly few.

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Big Easy Rising

Five years after Katrina, New Orleanians are showing how to do recovery right.

Nicole Gelinas

Five years ago, when Hurricane Katrina decimated the Gulf Coast, even optimistic observers had good reason to doubt that New Orleans would recover. It wasn't just that the storm had destroyed much of the city, leaving parts of it under 20 feet of water for weeks. New Orleans had long suffered from terrible violence, a poisonous political culture, and a fleeing population. Its public services were iffy on a good day, making it especially unprepared for the storm. What chance did it stand of returning to life—even with the $71.5 billion that the Bush White House and Congress sent to Louisiana for hurricane recovery?

Yet the city has come back more vigorously than most imagined possible, even fumbling its way toward becoming, maybe, an urban success story. With about 365,000 residents, the City That Care Forgot has recovered more than 80 percent of its pre-Katrina population, and its post-storm economy

MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES

After workers rebuilt and strengthened the city's breached levees, residents began to return.

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has done well, too: in July, unemployment in the city and surrounding suburbs was 7.5 percent, two points below the recession-battered national figure, while per-capita income is up more than 20 percent since 2004, even as traditional government-aid payments, such as welfare and Medicaid, remain lower. Visit New Orleans today, and you'll see a busy construction site, not a city laid waste by flooding.

The shock of Katrina, it turns out, produced a surprising renaissance in citizen initiative, one result of which was widespread recognition among New Orleanians that all that federal cash wasn't going to solve the city's long-standing problems on its own. Instead, engaged residents have kept local politicians on their toes, making sure that they use the recovery funds to transform and rejuvenate the city. They have taught the rest of the country, still reeling from the financial and economic crisis, a lesson: how to do recovery right.

Before the hurricane, New Orleans was unquestionably failing. During the second half of the twentieth century, the ills that afflicted many other American cities struck it particularly hard. Thanks to technology, the city's port, once a major driver of employment, needed fewer people to handle cargo. Manufacturers that earlier had moved jobs from the Northeast to the South to escape high costs moved them even farther away, to cheaper Latin America and Asia. Highway construction slashed through historic neighborhoods, many of them black, dissolving community ties. Whites scrambled to the suburbs after the public schools were desegregated. Racial progress elsewhere encouraged aspiring working- and middle-class African-Americans to leave for Los Angeles and, later, Atlanta. As oil prices plummeted during the 1980s, big energy-industry employers got rid of jobs in New Orleans and consolidated their operations in Houston instead—and when the oil industry recovered, Houston, not New Orleans, won the new jobs. By 2005, New Orleans was subsisting largely on tourism.

Escalating violence accompanied and worsened these trends. On the eve of the storm, the city's murder rate was nearly eight times the national average, with 59 people killed per 100,000 residents, compared with New York's seven. Residents would dash from their cars to their homes at night, hoping to avoid muggers; many black families' hope for their sons was just for them to finish high school and leave town alive. The police department gained a well-deserved reputation for sleaze, corruption, and worse: by the mid-1990s, two former cops were on death row. Partly because residents so distrusted the police, witnesses proved hard to come by, intensifying the city's crime problem. Small wonder residents of wealthier neighborhoods began to privatize law enforcement, paying off-duty cops to patrol and to escort people from their cars to their homes at night. By the time Katrina hit, New Orleans residents had such low expectations of the police that few were shocked when NOPD officers looted stores during the flood. Nor were they shocked when the federal government began charging cops with killing at least four civilians in the storm's chaotic aftermath.

New Orleans's dysfunctional political culture could take at least partial blame for the city's downward spiral. Corruption has been endemic. A longtime city council member, Oliver Thomas, just finished a prison sentence for bribery. Former congressman William Jefferson famously kept $90,000 in dirty cash in his freezer. Katrina-era mayor Ray Nagin, elected in 2002 for his supposed private-sector management expertise, can expect investigations over contract awards and conflicts of interest to continue, even though his two terms in office have expired. His former chief technology officer faces federal kickback charges. U.S. attorney Jim Letten, a Bush appointee, has spent years trying to clean up a culture of low-grade bribery in traffic court.

The city's public sector wasn't just corrupt; it was incompetent. Many of the Big Easy's brightest citizens—black, white, and Asian—had voted with their feet in escaping the city, leaving behind a less capable pool of potential elected officials, bureaucrats, and public workers. Successive mayors and city council members, most of them black, had risen through the ranks of mid-century civil rights and community activism groups. Though they did vital and often heroic work back then, they never mastered the workaday business of government.

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Nor were these the only woes besetting New Orleans. The city's infrastructure had deteriorated. Its schools were dismal; most public school kids failed to acquire basic reading and math skills. The starkest evidence of New Orleans's failure was the size of its population, which fell from its 1960 peak of 628,000 to 460,000 on the eve of the flood, with much of the middle class leaving the city. And with so few engaged middle-class voters remaining, New Orleans became too politically and culturally weak to revitalize itself, as other cities, New York leading the way, had done during the 1990s and 2000s. New Orleans had indeed become the City That Care Forgot.

When New Orleanians evacuated to places like Houston, they learned that cities *could* govern themselves well.

But when New Orleanians evacuated to places like Houston after the storm (see "Houston's Noble Experiment," Spring 2006), they learned an all-important lesson: cities *could* govern themselves well. Starting in late 2005, the exiles gradually returned to New Orleans with a new understanding that streets could be smooth, people could walk to their cars at night without fear, and school districts might actually try to educate poor kids from single-parent homes.

Returning residents also felt a new degree of personal investment in their city. Before Katrina, after all, most of them had never *chosen* to live in New Orleans; they had simply grown up there and remained. After the storm, though, being a resident became a conscious choice. It would have been easy enough to make a go of it in Houston, a place with greater economic opportunity and better quality of life. Those who returned anyway didn't want to do the hard work of rebuilding only to see appalling urban governance wreck their work.

At first, it seemed as though New Orleanians had learned little. In May 2006, nine months after the storm, they reelected Nagin, who had proved unable to handle the crisis and had blatantly played the race card during the campaign, looking to rally black support. The rest of the country looked on aghast: Why didn't voters throw the bum out?

It turns out that instead of looking for a heroic potentate to work miracles from on high, New Orleanians were making smaller-scale, bottom-up changes that would truly help their city. Beginning in the same election, voters reshaped the city council: today, only one of the seven council members is a pre-Katrina holdover. More important is that the members' résumés are subtly different from those of the old days. Fewer have community-organizing or social-services backgrounds; more have had careers in law, real estate, and management. These new members are likelier to view government as a provider of efficient public services than to consider it a weapon for social justice or a dispenser of jobs. They know, too, that city voters are paying attention in a way that they never have before. As new councilwoman Susan Guidry puts it, the biggest change in the electorate is "the level of citizen involvement" in day-to-day issues.

After nearly half a decade's worth of choosing a new kind of representation for themselves, New Orleanians were ready for bigger change this year, electing Democrat Mitch Landrieu as mayor in February. The election showed that New Orleanians could look past race in voting, something that wasn't true four years earlier. Though its African-American population has shrunk slightly since Katrina, the city remains 61 percent black, according to the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center. But a majority of blacks joined other voters to cast their votes for the person they thought most qualified, who happened to be white.

The new crop of New Orleans politicians knows that the first thing on the populace's mind is violent crime—and that people now expect results, not excuses. Though she represents a "diverse district," Guidry says, "people's needs are not

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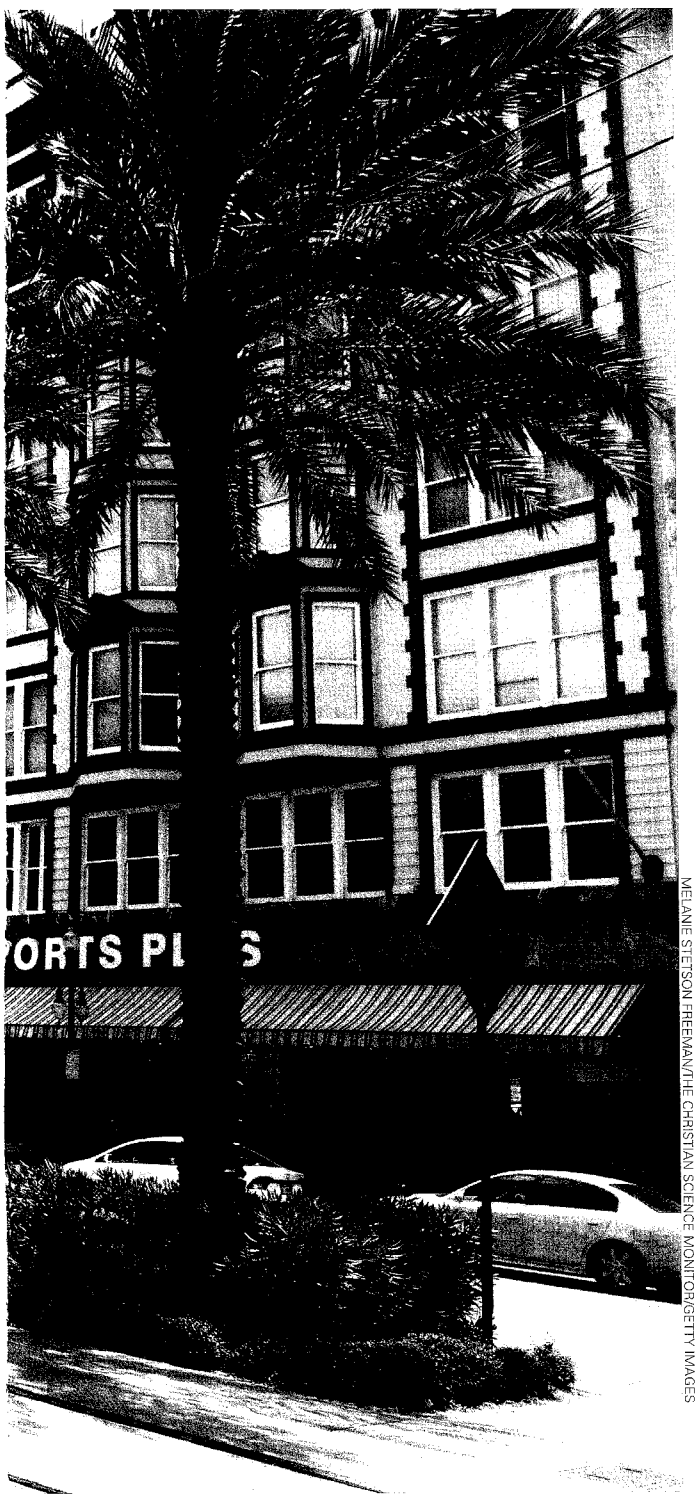

MELANIE STETSON FREEMAN/THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR/GETTY IMAGES

diverse"—they just want to be safe. Unfortunately, crime numbers were one of the first things to recover after Katrina (see "Baghdad on the Bayou," Spring 2007). Last year, the city racked up 174 killings. Calculating the murder rate is difficult because New Orleans's post-Katrina population was still in flux in 2009, but it's roughly 48 murders per 100,000 people, meaning that the city isn't much safer than it was six years ago.

The city council has started taking steps to change that deeply troubling statistic, in part by putting pressure on the Orleans Parish district attorney's office. By 2007, Eddie Jordan, a pre-Katrina holdover in that important post, was a disaster, with a nearly nonexistent conviction rate. His biggest claim to fame was bringing a multimillion-dollar discrimination judgment down on his office for a mass firing of white workers. He also made the wrong kind of criminal-justice headlines when newspapers reported that his girlfriend was more than a passing acquaintance of a man suspected of shooting a cop. Facing pressure from the council and the threat of a recall, Jordan slunk off. The stats of the new DA, Leon Cannizzaro, are significantly better. Last year, felony convictions doubled from the previous year, the independent Metropolitan Crime Commission says.

With Landrieu in office, the spirit of competent law enforcement also has someone to push its agenda in the executive branch. "The city of New Orleans is not safe," the mayor said forthrightly before his inauguration, in a welcome change from his predecessors, who either denied the crime problem or implied that New Orleans, a poor city, just had to put up with it. Landrieu has tapped Ronal Serpas, a New Orleans native who clocked two decades on the NOPD before heading up the Nashville police department, to serve as police superintendent. The move has met with approval from citizen crime watchers. As Thom Kahler, a journalist who runs the Nocrimeline website, observed of Serpas's Nashville tenure, "The crime rate there . . . dropped each year," reaching the lowest levels in 30 years.

Unlike most American cities, New Orleans has put federal largesse to good use, investing in transportation infrastructure.

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Serpas has his work cut out for him in the Big Easy. Because the NOPD has such a bad reputation, it still struggles to attract good candidates: only 25 of the 66 students in its police academy's most recent class graduated. Potential recruits consider the department an employer of last resort, despite a $43,000 starting salary, more than most new teachers make. Serpas's admirably high standards should improve the academy's graduation rate, though it will complicate recruitment, at least in the short term: he will hire only officers with at least two years of college or military service. Another challenge is that he needs more outsiders. Right now, many New Orleans cops are intimately familiar with the neighborhoods they patrol, which isn't necessarily a good thing, since it isn't easy to arrest your cousin for domestic violence. A further challenge: though Serpas is pushing active policing to prevent crime, it's not yet clear that New Orleans will accept the aggressive tactics, including stop-and-frisk, that have helped cut violence in cities like New York.

Serpas knows that the police need to "win the public's confidence" so that people stop fearing and distrusting them—a perfectly rational attitude in the abuse-ridden recent past. So he and Landrieu have invited federal monitors to offer an outside perspective. Serpas has also opened each precinct's Compstat meetings, at which commanders and officers discuss current crime statistics and tactics to combat violence, to the public. And he has ordered the posting of reliable crime statistics online, satisfying bloggers like Kahler, who have long complained of delays, omissions, and inaccuracies in reporting the numbers.

After years of cynicism, New Orleanians clearly believe that Serpas can make a difference. "Good guys winning?" Kahler wrote exuberantly on his blog in September. "In the past week, there were only 5 robberies—or attempted robberies—reported in the French Quarter and its environs. And on Friday—Friday of all days!—the . . . 8th District NOPD [in the Quarter] received absolutely *NO* reports of crimes." Confidence in Serpas even kept French Quarter residents from voting this October to pay off-duty cops for extra security. Still, thugs engaged in a gunfight in a poorer neighborhood shot a two-year-old boy to death in late September, showing how far New Orleans has to go.

The ranks of New Orleans's new crime fighters aren't filled only by politicians and police officers; citizens, too, have joined the battle. Local judges have been a feckless bunch over the years, so in 2007, members of a new citizens' group, Court Watch NOLA, started bringing bright yellow clipboards to the city's courtrooms to monitor casework. The volunteers, many of them retirees, assess the efficiency of prosecutors, public defenders, and judges—for example, one judge took over an hour of unscheduled breaks one day in 2009. This past summer, the group issued a report that harshly criticized a court for being closed when scheduled to be open, "costing countless wasted hours to court personnel, police officers, parties and witnesses who make an unnecessary trip to court to find the courtroom door locked or the judge unavailable." The same report listed performance stats, judge by judge.

The volunteers are currently tracking 500 felony cases. Though such citizen involvement may sound tedious, it works. As the Metropolitan Crime Commission points out, "judicial efficiency continued to improve through 2009," with felony cases taking 120 days to close in 2009—longer than the national average of 92 days, but much better than the previous year's 140. Judges get it: run-of-the-mill felony cases may still generate little press attention, but someone is out there now, watching and taking notes.

Just as energized citizens and their new representatives have begun to transform law enforcement in New Orleans, they've demolished the business-as-usual attitude toward another pillar of public order: infrastructure. New Orleanians immediately recognized that the calamitous flooding after Katrina was an infrastructure failure, not a natural disaster. Like Arizona with its aqueducts and New York City with its subways, New Orleans survives thanks to engineering marvels: the region's federally built and locally maintained levees and flood walls. During Katrina, though, that infrastructure failed to withstand a storm whose force was well within its intended parameters.

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Big Easy residents and their state and local pols recognized from the outset that improving infrastructure would be essential to giving people the confidence to invest time and money in rebuilding their homes. So they made sure that a healthy fraction of the federal recovery funds for Louisiana—about 37 percent, or $27 billion—went toward nuts-and-bolts reconstruction. In particular, the Army Corps of Engineers has mostly finished a massive $15 billion project in and around New Orleans to protect people and property from future storms.

New Orleanians understood that fixing their infrastructure would require more than money; they needed to fix infrastructure politics, too. Before Katrina, the "levee boards," which oversaw maintenance for levees and flood walls for the New Orleans area, were patronage factories, not credible safeguards of crucial assets. Then Ruthie Frierson, a genteel uptown real-estate agent, came along. Frierson helped launch a new group, Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans, to push for a constitutional amendment consolidating the region's ten levee boards into two. The reform, the group believed, would reduce waste and concentrate public and press attention on the levees. The citizen-activists also insisted on some radical new provisions—including that the people running the new boards actually know something about levees. The ballot measure passed a year after Katrina, with 80 percent of the vote.

New Orleanians recognized that the flooding after Katrina was an infrastructure failure, not a natural disaster.

Beyond its waterfronts, New Orleans has become an enormous construction site, as a mass of startlingly new infrastructure is built alongside the crumbling old. Soon, a new $803 million, 5.5-mile bridge will connect the city to affluent commuter towns across Lake Pontchartrain, replacing an outdated 45-year-old model. Local roads, already a neglected disaster before Katrina made them worse, are receiving a nearly $700 million refurbishment. Spruced-up streetcars and brand-new buses traverse them. Here, too, local officials realize that citizens are watching. One of Mayor Landrieu's first acts was to roll out a detailed list of road, playground, and library projects costing anywhere from a few hundred dollars apiece to a few million, so that neighborhoods could track progress.

atrina also washed away much of New Orleans's sorry public school district, where majorities of students consistently failed. Once again, citizens are improving on what they had. The city's biggest education reform is that the majority of its 35,000 public school kids now attend charter schools overseen by a state-run school district. It's too early to tell much from test-score results, but it's clear that the success and optimism of charter school operators—from the national KIPP outfit to local nonprofits—at getting schools up and running has been a big factor in residents' decisions to return home.

Tiffany Monier, who works in finance at a private firm, came back to New Orleans in 2006 after seeking shelter from Katrina in Houston and Baton Rouge. She enrolled her fifth-grade son, Dante, in the inaugural class of KIPP Believe College Prep, a new uptown school. Teachers and staff there challenged her son—"a bright kid," she says proudly—to prepare for admission to one of New Orleans's top private high schools this fall. "He came home every day and talked about what he had learned in school," she says, and he won admission to the high school. His classmates, many of them from poor, single-parent homes, also benefited from KIPP's orderly environment, Monier adds.

New Orleans would do well, though, to take a more practical approach to paying for its new schools. Before Katrina, the city spent about $8,000 per student. In 2008, its schools (both in the state-run district and in the smaller traditional school district) spent $15,000 to $16,000 per child—the one area of New Orleans's budget

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in which operating spending has increased dramatically. Much of the extra aid has come from the feds, who provided more than half of the state-run district's revenues in 2008, up from the 15 percent that they sent to New Orleans public schools before Katrina. When the federal money runs out, New Orleans will have to cut back elsewhere, or hike taxes, to fund its newly expensive school system.

To avoid that result, the city and state should require enterprising charter school administrators to compete on cost as well as on results. Some charters seem perfectly capable of operating on a shoestring. As Mark Nguyen, education coordinator of the economic development arm of Mary Queen of Vietnam Church, says of his group's charter school, "We just want a building"—to get out of the leaky trailers in which it has been teaching kids.

Even New Orleans's economy has adjusted to what a few years ago would have been unimaginable upheaval. It remains largely dependent on tourism and conventions, true, but start-ups in other industries are beginning to call New Orleans home. Nic Perkin and Justin Brownhill, both New Yorkers with no ties to New Orleans, decided in 2007 to make the Crescent City the headquarters for a venture that would let companies raise cash by selling financial assets called receivables.

Perkin and Brownhill picked New Orleans for hardheaded reasons, not emotional ones. They needed the East Coast time zone to run a financial business, as well as a legal environment favorable to trading receivables (Louisiana had it—who knew?). They also wanted someplace cheap. At a start-up company, Perkin explains, "every dollar makes a difference." New Orleans, with low taxes and inexpensive commercial and residential real estate, fit the bill. Three years on, Perkin thinks that he and Brownhill made the right call: their company, the Receivables Exchange, has grown from five local employees to 55. The partners have found that many of the talented people who left the city for better economic opportunity long before Katrina are eager to return, helping reverse the brain drain—a sign of the resurgent hope in New Orleans. And Perkin and Brownhill have discovered a benefit in the ease of persuading potential clients or vendors to come to New Orleans for a meeting: it's a short flight from both coasts, and visitors enjoy the food and the sights.

Perkin and Brownhill are far from alone in choosing New Orleans. Their offices—on Camp Street, in the Central Business District—are surrounded by start-ups. On his blog earlier this year, business consultant Taylor Davidson listed 58 such companies, from Audiosocket, which licenses music rights to entertainment companies, to TurboSquid, which deals in 3D modeling. "There's a lot going on in New Orleans," Davidson says.

The companies keep coming. Perkin says that he receives "at least one e-mail a month" from a friend or colleague moving to New Orleans. "The cost of living is 30, 40, 50 percent less" than living in New York, he observes. As for quality of life, Perkin acknowledges concerns about crime. But he draws on his experience growing up in Manhattan in the 1970s and '80s. In New York, he says, change came gradually; it happens on a weekly basis in New Orleans. "I never thought that I would see *two* cities reinvent themselves," he adds.

New Orleans's recovering economy contrasts starkly with that of the nation as a whole, where investors remain paralyzed—shocked by the financial and economic collapse, terrified of arbitrary Washington actions, and crowded out by government activity. And in many ways besides investment, strange though it may sound, New Orleans provides a model for the rest of the country in the wake of the financial crisis.

Above all, the city has refused to spend the past five years pretending from a fiscal standpoint that the storm never happened. Before Katrina, New Orleans employed 7,406 full-time workers. By late 2006, it had slashed its workforce 36 percent, to 4,735, and the number hasn't risen much since. Even though tax collections still fall short of pre-Katrina collections, the city faces a $70 million deficit this year against a $1.2 billion budget, hardly disastrous. In fiscal terms, it's very different from cities and states around the nation, which, bolstered by federal "stimulus"

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funds, continue to throw money around as if the property and credit bubbles had never burst.

New Orleanians have cut back in part by taking the same pragmatic approach to basic government services that they did to politics. Last year, for example, the city's Regional Transit Authority handed over operations to France-based Veolia Transportation under a five-year contract, seeking to reduce excessive labor costs and improve service. It took Katrina to help New Orleans figure out that the purpose of transit is to serve customers, not government employees. Again, that's a realization that has eluded many states and cities whose payrolls keep swelling.

Then there's that $27 billion spent on infrastructure—the nearly 40 percent of the money that the feds sent Louisiana, a fraction that easily bests the federal stimulus of 2009, which devoted less than 20 percent of its funds to the infrastructure that the country desperately needed. But perhaps the most instructive recovery success story in New Orleans is an $8.6 billion program—a federal one—called Road Home, which encouraged owners of damaged or destroyed homes to accelerate their decision whether to rebuild in New Orleans or make their evacuation permanent. If they decided to rebuild, they would receive a $66,000 grant, on average, to help. Alternatively, they could sell their homes to the state, with the proceeds first going toward paying off mortgages and liens. The state would raze what was left of the house, if anything, and sell off the property, offering the first bid to next-door neighbors.

Though stories abound about Road Home's inefficiencies, inconsistencies, and potential for fraud, the program led to massive housing reinvestment across the city. Despite early criticisms that the program would subsidize an exodus from southeast Louisiana, 89 percent of New Orleans families who participated in it opted to rebuild. The certainty that it created, in turn, encouraged further private investment: homeowners wouldn't have to worry that they would rebuild only to wind up living next to a decaying shell. In the upper-middle-class neighborhood of Lakeview, where Katrina rendered about a third of all lots vacant, residents initially cringed at the bargain-basement prices that the lots fetched—as low as $50,000, less than a third of their pre-storm values. But as a stable environment emerged, prices rose as high as $80,000. Prices had to go down steeply before they could go back up again.

That's a concept that the federal government still hasn't grasped in other areas. In the rest of the nation—for example, the Florida and central California neighborhoods that have faced a similar vacancy problem since the housing bubble burst four years ago—federal aid to financial institutions and home borrowers has helped people deny reality rather than face up to it. The Obama administration has helped people stay in homes that they can't afford via new, federally subsidized teaser-rate mortgages; it has rescued lenders, too, who have used the federal support to delay necessary losses and foreclosures. A genuine national recovery program would follow the Road Home model, helping people and institutions realize their losses and start over, even if it hurts at first.

The city has refused to spend the past five years pretending from a fiscal standpoint that the storm never happened.

New Orleans could still fail, of course. The city has yet to prove that it has the political fortitude to drive down crime and keep it low. Social problems, including young single motherhood, still pervade whole neighborhoods. Complacency and voter apathy could return. The infrastructure that the feds are building could remain unfinished. The newcomers could give up—just as previous New Orleanians, both native and transplanted, reluctantly gave up on the city before Katrina.

But for now, New Orleans has something that it hasn't had in decades: optimism. That's an asset that the whole country could use a dose of.

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The Windows

A short story

Andrew Klavan

He began every day with a naked woman. FemArt.com had a new one each week. He didn't subscribe to the site. The free 30-second sample video was enough. Explicit, even exploratory, without being overtly sexual or pornographic. Just a nude girl or sometimes two posing or laughing or running on a beach or through the grass or by a lake or near a railroad track. Not the likeliest scenarios, admittedly—he sometimes pitied the women for the harsh stones or gritty sand against their bare flesh—but their images beguiled his imagination and brought him to life.

Then there was e-mail. Notes from the Fever Swamp. Fears; conspiracies; dire predictions. *I hear my upstairs neighbors whispering at night . . . . The president is one of them. . . . It's all foretold in Revelation. . . . They have the materials they need for the Times Square attack. . . .*

Sometimes there was a personal threat as well. There was one today, in fact. *We're getting closer, Stein. You can count your days on a single hand. A single finger maybe. . . .*

During his life—that's how he thought about it: back in the old days, during his life—he had had a reputation as a hard case, a tough guy. Plenty of journalistic adventures to his credit. Government corruption exposed. Some mobster stuff. A couple of war zones. Enough danger and legal trouble and nights on the road to cost him a wife at least, a poor darling from his native suburbs who'd signed on for something a little more home-and-garden. He was no stranger to the wickedness of the world, in other words. Back in the old days, during his life.

Now though, here, alone, each time he opened an e-mail threat, his stomach did that Broken Elevator thing, that sudden, souring plunge. No point in calling the police any more. They were weary of him. Skeptical. But he—Stein—had every reason to take this stuff seriously, and he did.

He put most of the e-mails in a file labeled LUNACY. One or two—the one about the Times Square attack, for instance; plus the threat on his life—went into a smaller file labeled LEGIT.

Then he made coffee.

He drank it black, out of a mug decorated with the newspaper's logo. Even he found that sort of pitiful. He carried the mug around the apartment, sipping from it and muttering to himself—muttering, oftentimes, phrases from his final argument with Connor, the paper's editor in chief. Things he'd said, things he wished he'd said.

Illustrations by Jock

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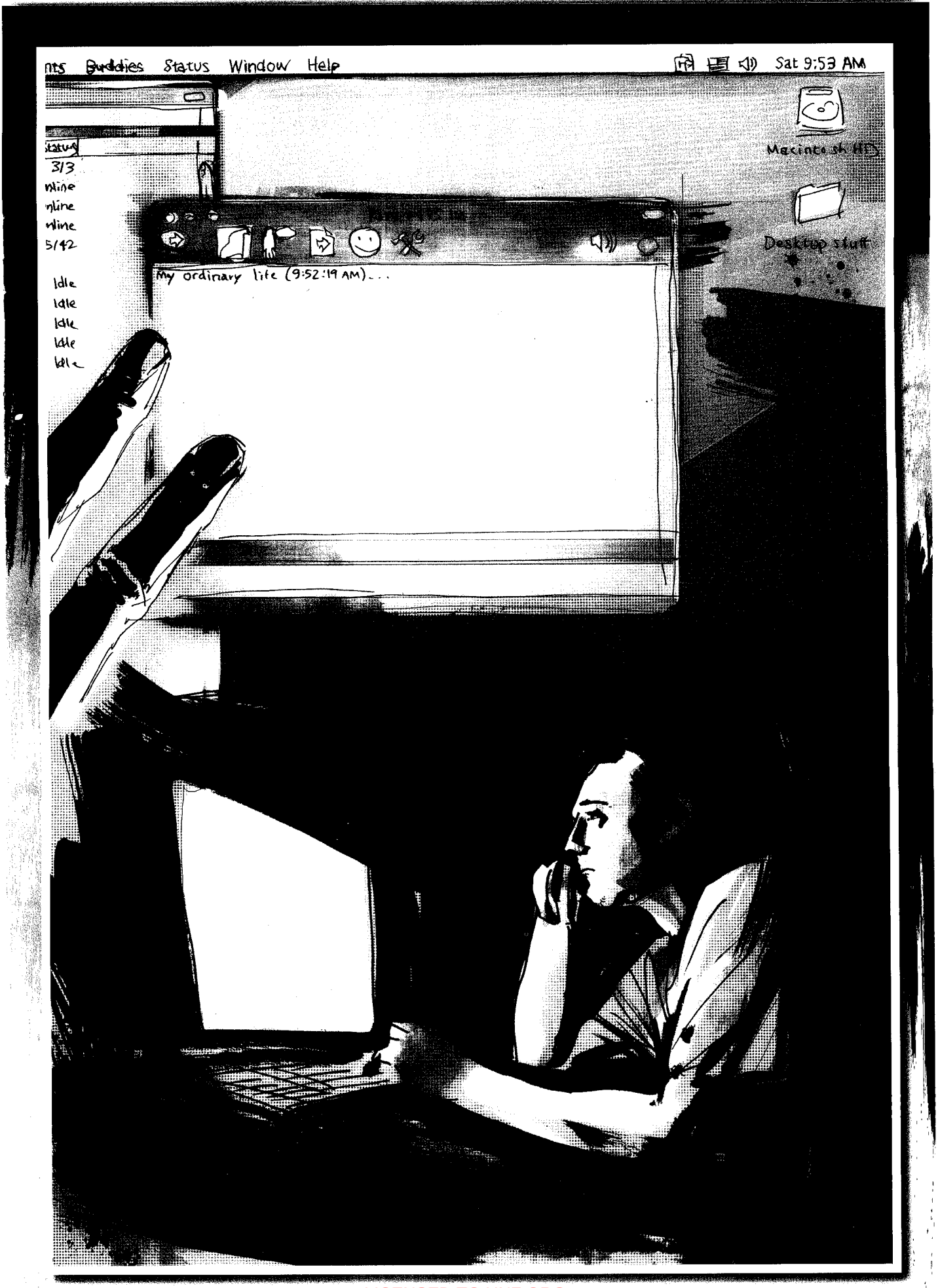

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"Maybe the readers are alienated by tiptoeing, candy-assed lies, you ever think of that? . . . It isn't about me. . . . How is the simple truth self-dramatizing? . . . Taking it personally? What does that mean? Because I'm a Jew? Is that what you're saying? Come out and say it, you little . . ."

He hardly knew he was doing it until suddenly he'd realize. He found that sort of pitiful too.

This morning, his coffee half-done, he stopped by the window beside his desk. Lifted the slats on the shutter. Peeked out at the sidewalk three stories below: the sidewalk and the brownstones and the pale green sycamores of West 69th Street near the park. Suits and skirts on their way to work. Artists and neighborhood ladies walking their dogs. No one suspicious. No one standing strangely still, watching his window. As there sometimes was. Or as he sometimes thought there was.

What a knucklehead he was. What a sucker. How did he even know she was who she pretended to be?

He closed the slats. He never opened the shutters. Never.

Time to get to work. Time to update his blog, distilling yesterday's research—phone calls and texts to and from a growing network of sources, websites studied through the long night just past. But before he could begin, there was a strain of music, the heavenly harp-stroke of a cartoon angel. An instant message. Rose2475.

Stein moved eagerly toward the sound. Quickly sat at his desk, his hand going to the computer mouse, his head jutting toward the monitor.

morning jerry. u there? He had made himself invisible online. She couldn't see him. *if u dont answer 1 day I'll stop trying.* Then: *no I won't.* Then: *really. ru there?*

Im here, he typed, after a moment's hesitation. *sorry. another threat today. Hav 2 b cautious.*

He despised himself the moment he sent it. Trying to make himself sound dangerous and romantic. Like a posing teen. Hoping to impress her. What a knucklehead he was. What a sucker. How did he even know she was who she pretended to be? How did he even know she was a *she*? Probably some old man with a fetish or some ten-year-old prankster punking him for laughs. Or one of the evildoers. An evildoer cat's-paw, toying with him. Maybe so.

I worry about u, she wrote back, and, for all his self-reproaches, he found it crazy-gratifying: she worried about him. *ur safety. ur health. ur mind even!!! y not take a break, get away, come visit me (she sed batting her lashes) meet me.*

She always refused to send him photographs—and he couldn't find any online. She said he had to come and see her for himself. She promised she wasn't hideous. He wouldn't look upon her and turn to stone, she said. He liked her teasing him like that, beckoning him. Little did she know he sometimes imagined her with the face and body of one of the naked women on FemArt.com. Or maybe she did know. If she was a man—an assassin smirking at the keyboard—she would know precisely the sorts of things she had maneuvered him into thinking.

Whoever she really was, he had met her first in a chat room where he was following up a tip about a cell upstate. She was a librarian in Oneida, she said. She was looking for sources of local history. That conjured in him images of a walk down tree-lined lanes, holding hands with a prim girl who would be beautiful if you would just take off those glasses, Miss Jones. . . . A little too sweet a dream. A little too easy. And all to the music of that angel chord of hers.

u could just walk out the door and hop on the thruway, she wrote. *There's zero to keep u ther. u could come today.*

You can count your days on a single hand, he thought. *A single finger maybe. . . .*

But she was right: he could go. He could see her for himself. Stuff a change of clothes into a traveling bag. Be there by afternoon.

how ru? he wrote back. *Wuz new in oneida?*

She told him. *same old.* Getting ready for the

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library's summer programs. Reading books to the children at story time, her favorite part of the day. *My ordinary life.*

Stein touched the monitor with his fingertips.

After Rose2475 signed off, he settled down to work.

His computer screen was divided into windows. His blog, The Threat Level, was at the center. His new documents and interviews were in tabbed folders to the upper right, his saved research in folders to the left. Live views from various webcams around the city were arrayed along the bottom: shifting angles on Times Square, Central Park, Ground Zero, the Manhattan skyline. Up top, there were shots from the security camera outside his brownstone and from the camera he'd mounted above his own apartment door to take in the welcome mat, the landing, and the top of the stairs.

There were divisions within the Threat Level page as well. Links to other blogs. Relevant news stories from other sources. His own most recent posting. And—always—the column that had gotten him fired: "Their God Is Not God." He never took that down. He left the headline boldly visible—and the lede as well: "If God is real, some descriptions of him will necessarily be more accurate than others." Then a link to the body of the text. It made him feel good—made him feel unbowed and defiant—to keep it posted like that. He couldn't be silenced, etc. Connor and his compliant city room could all go to hell, etc. But, of course, he knew how little it meant in fact. Even as it swirled down the drain with the rest of the lying old media, the newspaper maintained a circulation of half a million. His blog? It had maybe 300 subscribers, got maybe a thousand hits on a good day. A voice in the blogosphere wilderness. A voice crying: *Their God is not God.*

Never mind. Business time. He went at the keyboard. Intel pointing to an imminent and catastrophic attack on Times Square seemed increasingly credible. The mosque the city was planning to build near Ground Zero was widely viewed as a major victory among the terrorist cells and had inspired them to plan more missions. Federal denials of increasing cell-phone and Internet chatter were the result of bureaucratic stupidity and politically correct appeasement. *Don't be offensive. Don't get them angry. We don't want to insult anyone's religion.* The same logic that had lost Stein his job.

"Why the hell not, Connor?" he muttered. *Law enforcement sources say their hands have been increasingly tied,* he wrote. "You think slapping God's name on something makes it sacred?" *The cells have used so-called community liaisons to infiltrate antiterrorist agencies at the highest level.* "I could slap God's name on a butcher knife and cut your stupid throat, you pompous, cowardly . . ."

Once he got going like this, the prose flowed, febrile and fluid. On and on without paragraphs or punctuation, just the occasional ellipsis like a gasp for air. Even he—some part of him—watched the words unwind and wondered if he was raving now, if he was mad. But the sources were reliable, deep, solid. He was still a good reporter. He leaned into it and went on and on.

There was—suddenly it seemed—a knock at the door. He nearly jumped out of his own skin. That wasn't just a turn of phrase either. He really felt his inner man skyrocket while his body froze in place.

"Who is it?" he shouted, turning in his chair only slowly.

"Morton's. Your sandwich," a voice came back.

He glanced at the clock on the bottom of his screen. Noon already. He checked the view of the camera above his door. It was the guy—one of the usual delivery guys. No one else, as far as he could see.

He felt the stiffness in his body as he stood. He went—not to the door—but to the shuttered window on the opposite wall. "You didn't buzz," he shouted over his shoulder. "How'd you get in the building?"

"Old lady was coming in at the same time, let me in."

Stein peeked out through the shutter slats. There. On the sidewalk. A man—an olive-skinned man in jeans and a T-shirt—just now turning away. Wasn't he? Just now walking away? Or had he simply been strolling past?

Stein closed the slats. Swallowed hard. Went to the door. He didn't use the peephole. They could just blow you away through the peephole.

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He opened the door only enough to let the delivery guy pass the paper bag through to him. He passed back a cash tip.

Delivery Guy shook his head. "It ain't a jungle outpost, man. You're in the middle of Manhattan."

"What difference does that make if nobody's looking?"

He shut the door.

He set the bag by his keyboard. Took up the phone, the land line. There was usually only one other person in the building at this hour. Agnes Reese. Eighty-something. Half-crazy and all alone, just her and her long-suffering bichon. He could hear her phone ringing downstairs from here. He could hear her heels on her wooden floor.

"Yes?" she said tentatively. No one ever called her but con men, politicians, and her son in St. Louis.

"Agnes. It's Jerry, upstairs. Did you just come home, let the delivery man in?"

"I don't think so," she said slowly. "No. No. I don't think so. I've been home all morning."

He felt the cold sweat come out on his face. *Probably nothing*, he thought. Then he thought: *Famous last words*. What he'd be saying to himself just before they came through the door: *Probably nothing*. Then: *Bang*.

He tried to shake it off. He'd been under fire before. He'd been closer to death before. Still. There was something peculiarly awful about the prospect of dying in silence, dying invisible, as if you had never existed, right here at the heart of the city. *Unrelated to terrorism*, the police would say. Because that's what they always said now, when they could get away with it. And the reporters, even his former colleagues at the paper, maybe especially them, would nod and say, *Strange dude, you know. A blog like his attracts a lot of wack jobs.*

If a man tries to tell the truth and there's no one willing to hear him, does he make a sound when he falls?

He cut a sad figure even to himself as he sat eating his sandwich, mashing the meat and bread mechanically, tasting nothing. But he was roused from self-pity by that lone, comically angelic chord.

lunchtime here. been thinking about u. r u ok?

Rose2475.

Again, he hesitated, one hand above the keyboard. Then he pecked out. *dunno. onto something with this times square thing. lotso threats.*

o jerry. u have to stop. get out awile. ull make yerself crazy. the life of the world is not on your shoulders.

who says? wot if it is?

u still have 2 live. ull make yourself crazy. cmere. really. u need someone 2 talk 2. me 2. need perspective. zero is ever as bad as it seems.

"Except when it is," he murmured aloud.

When she was gone, he sat with his sandwich in his hand half-eaten, his soda on the desk half-drunk, and he stared at the webcam images of the city. He turned the sound up on a live video of a Times Square corner. Heard the traffic noise there like the ocean in a seashell. Saw a workman with a dolly maneuvering the curb. Tourists passing in girl-boy pairs. A woman in her spring dress who drew from him the same life-longing as the nudes at FemArt.com. *Cmere.*

On other windows, there were other scenes. Small billowing spring clouds passing behind the spire of the Empire State Building. The ruin of Ground Zero, digger-trucks pawing at the dust of the murdered dead. A businessman in Central Park, strolling—dreaming—with his hands in the pockets of his suit. The skyline from across the East River, a barge passing lazily on the water.

He didn't break down and cry for his city. He wasn't the type. But he felt the urge. His eyes moved from one window on his monitor to another and another until he could almost feel the texture of the air out there, the concrete under his shoes and the towers of steel and glass bending over him like a worried mother. He

Unrelated to terrorism, the police would say. Because that's what they always said now, when they could get away with it.

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could almost—almost—lift his eyes to the strip of bright blue sky above the building tops, clear as a portal through which holy heaven could savor the striving stone prayer of the place, of man in his free and civilized moment, the living Manhattan.

He had been asking himself, it seemed, forever: Was he insane, or was he alone in seeing the world as it was? It hadn't occurred to him until this second that he might be both.

Now, he felt, he was about to come to a decision. Like a hero in a movie when the music swells. He was about to stand triumphantly out of his chair and stride into the bedroom and throw some clothing into a bag and go, just go.

Talk about self-dramatizing, he told himself. How courageous did you have to be to steal an afternoon with a librarian in Oneida?

And he really was about to—he told himself—he really was, when a swift and sudden shadow passed through a webcam window and was gone.

His eyes moved to the spot. The shot from the security camera outside the brownstone. It was mounted high and pointed down at the door to the vestibule. There was no one there now, no one visible. But he'd seen—he thought he'd seen—something—the movement of the door, maybe, as it opened and closed. He thought he'd caught it from the corner of his eye as he gazed at the shifting views of the greater city.

And now—now he heard something too. The creak of a tread on the brownstone staircase. A knock—not on his door but on Agnes Reese's door downstairs. So there, it was one of her deliveries or a workman the super had sent, that's all. Yet Stein sat very still, and listened. He heard Agnes's heels on the wooden floor. Heard the door open. Her quaking voice, muffled and low. A man's voice answering. The door closed again. Then silence.

Slowly, Stein lay his sandwich down on the wax paper by his soda cup. Why didn't he hear her footsteps, her heels on the wooden floor retreating? Why didn't he hear the tread creak on the staircase as the man went away?

Probably nothing.

His palm went over his clammy face and he despaired.

He was unsteady when he stood. Unsteady when he moved to the window again and peeked out again through the slats. He saw a man sitting on the stoop across the street. Wasn't it the selfsame olive-skinned man as before? The same man who had quickly turned and walked away before? Now he was just sitting there, just biding his time.

Stein stepped decisively to the phone. Dialed Agnes Reese again. He heard the phone ringing downstairs. Ringing and ringing. No footsteps. No one answered. It took him three tries to fit the handset back into its cradle.

Vertigo. The Broken Elevator. His mind blank. He drifted back toward his desk, unthinking. Unthinking, he gazed at the webcam windows. The view of Times Square was a broad one now, taken from several stories above the street. A river of vans and cars and yellow cabs moving down Seventh. A tide of people walking on the sidewalks and the pedestrian lane. A ceaseless dazzle of advertising imagery flashing above it all on video screens as big as houses. One soaring billboard of a beauty in a bikini presiding over the street like its sovereign goddess.

Stein stared at the scene. Shifted his eyes and stared at Ground Zero, the digger-trucks pawing the dust.

Their women wore black cowls like Death.

When he moved again, he could not tell whether his sudden energy was courage or terror. He broke from the spot and dashed for the bedroom door. He did what he had meant to do: threw a bag on the bed, threw clothes into the bag. But now he could not tell—he really could not determine—whether he was planning to make his heroic march into the unknown or his getaway in cowardly panic. What was the difference? How could you know? A man walks a tightrope with his eyes closed. Is he a gallant daredevil, or just afraid to look down? Likewise a man who goes about the business of life for another day, knowing.

He carried his bag to the door. He glanced back at the computer, at the windows showing Ground Zero, Times Square. He heard the ocean-in-a-seashell traffic. He heard a tread creak on the staircase.

He stood there, his hand on the doorknob.

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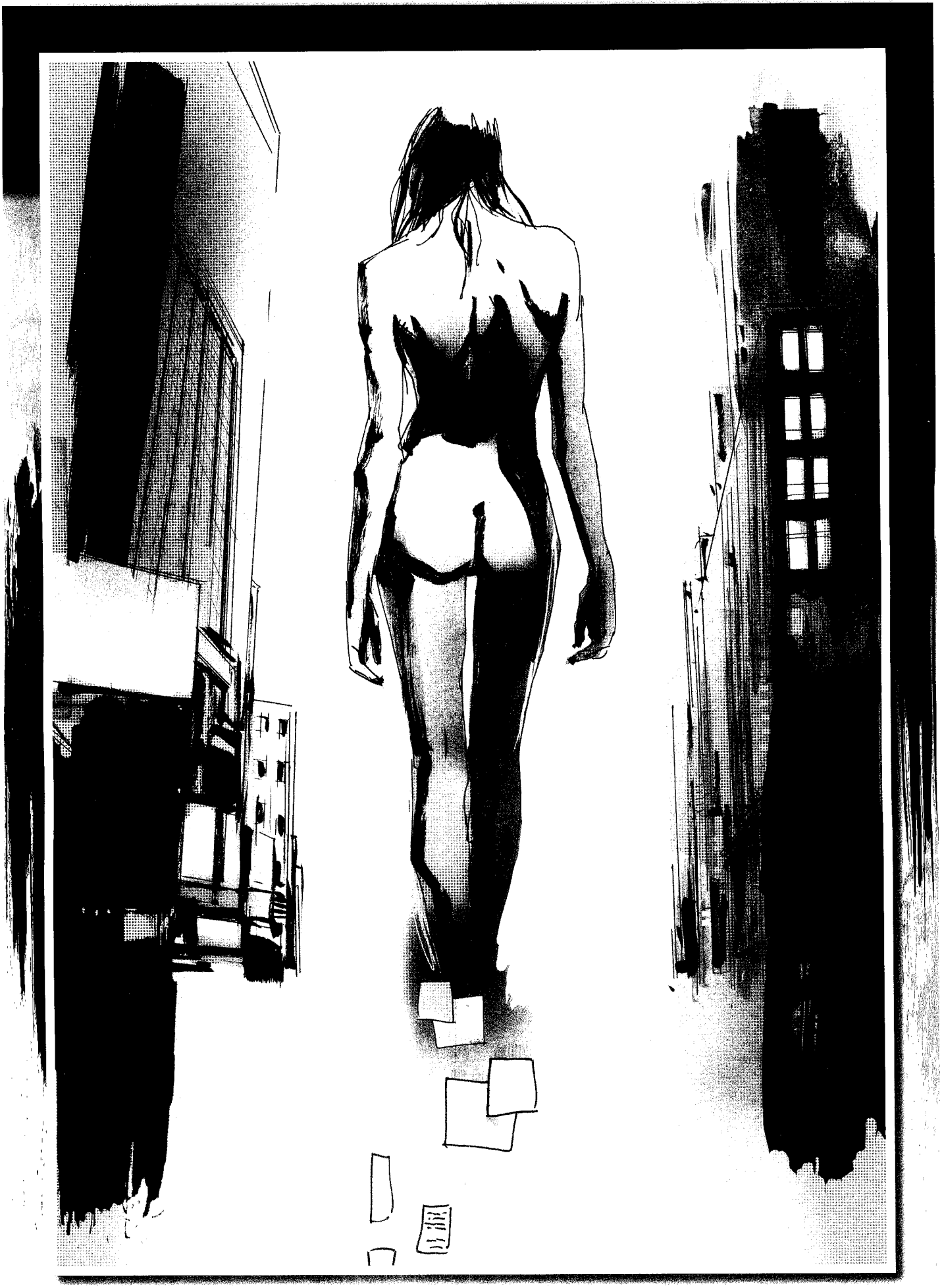

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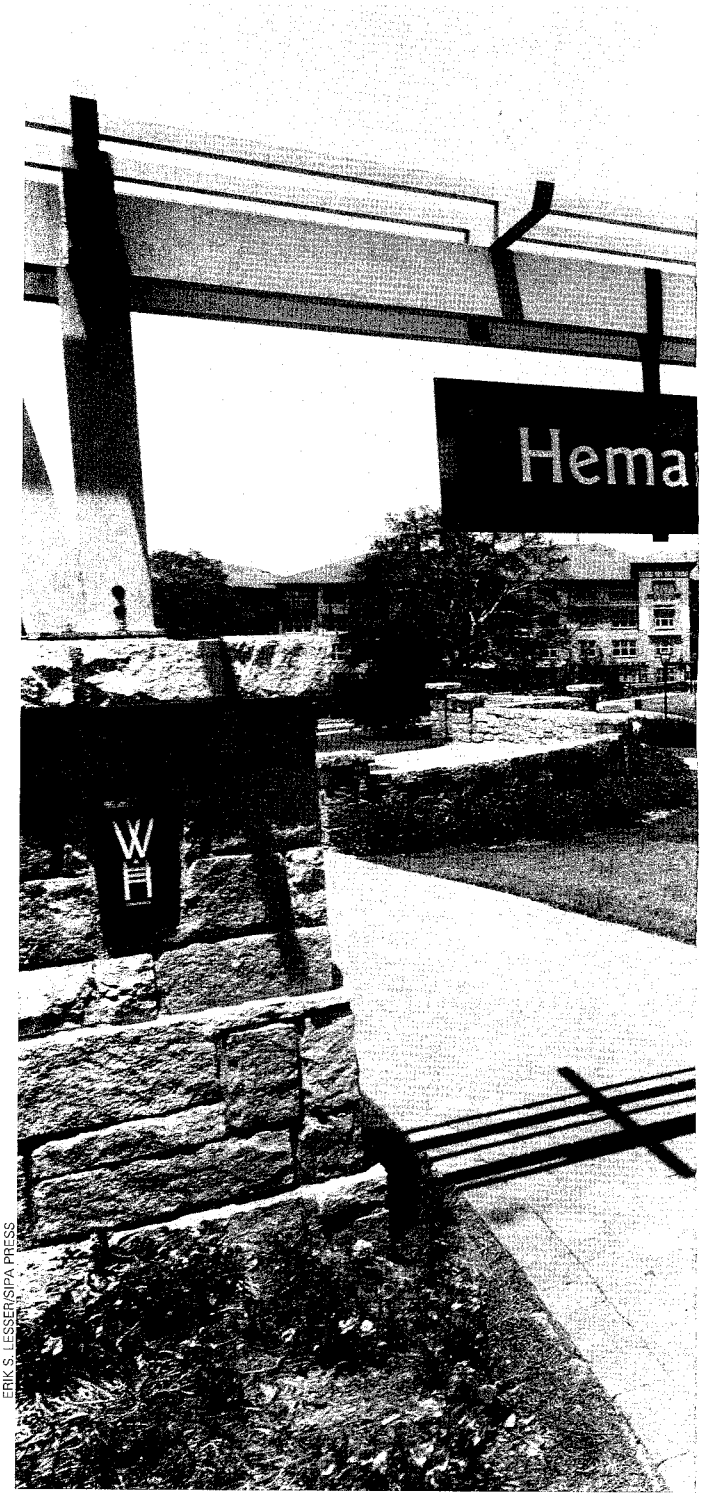
Atlanta's Public-Housing Revolution

Renee Glover has torn down blighted projects, required tenants to work, and transformed lives.

Howard Husock

No one can doubt that the 1996 reform of public assistance really did "end welfare as we know it," as President Clinton said—reducing the welfare rolls from more than 5 million to fewer than 2 million households. Its signature five-year time limit on assistance drew millions of the poor back into the world of work, making the reform of cash welfare the greatest social-policy success of a generation.

But if you think that America no longer encourages long-term dependency or underclass poverty, you haven't been paying attention to public housing. Like cash welfare before the reform, public housing is dominated by extremely poor single-parent families (53 percent of public-housing households nationwide earn less than $10,000 a year, and only 13 percent have two adult residents). Like welfare, public housing offers recipients a disincentive to marry: because rents are fixed at 30 percent of household income, there's good reason not to put a second wage earner on the lease. And like welfare, public-housing projects—and the closely related voucher programs run by housing authorities—impose neither a work requirement nor a time limit on recipients. So not only do 2.2 million people live in public-housing units in America;



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Glover, head of the housing authority, strolls through the redeveloped site of a former project.

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they spend an average of more than eight years in them. And dwarfing their ranks are the 5 million living in private, voucher-paid housing, where the average length of residency is six years.

In short, American housing policy encourages the formation of households in which low-income single women raise children—exactly the sort of homes where kids' prospects are bleakest. Crime rates, moreover, are consistently high in and around public housing, and voucher units have been widely implicated in the spread of social problems to formerly safe areas. The problem is financial, as well: housing vouchers alone, which didn't even exist until 1974, now cost taxpayers $18 billion, more than the $16.9 billion that we spend on welfare. And it's a policy that disproportionately affects the African-American poor. Nearly 45 percent of public-housing tenants are black, as are 42 percent of voucher recipients.

All this makes what Renee Glover is doing in Atlanta so important. Since 1994, Glover, a child of Jim Crow–era Jacksonville, Florida, has led the Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA)—the nation's fifth-largest public-housing system, with 50,000 tenants and voucher recipients, 99 percent of them, like her, African-American. She has drawn national recognition for the fact that during her tenure, Atlanta became the first city in the United States to tear down virtually all its projects. But Glover's plan is far more ambitious than demolition: she has set out to transform the dysfunctional behavior that condemns people to languish for years in public housing. Her approach is the most dramatic change in any city's public-housing system since Franklin Roosevelt created the program in 1937.

When Glover first took charge of the AHA, just 18.5 percent of household heads in the city's bleak projects held jobs. At a time when Atlanta overall had the nation's highest murder rate, crime was six times higher in the projects than the city average. Lawlessness prevailed in these campus-style complexes. Drug gangs had their own apartments for conducting business, such as grisly initiation ceremonies (in one, teenagers performed oral sex on a six-year-old boy to prove that no act was too horrible to commit). Calls to 911 were so numerous, Atlanta police lieutenant Scott Kreher recalls, that reports of anything but the worst violent crime had to wait, sometimes for more than eight hours. "It was very common to start the night shift with 50 or 60 calls pending," he says. In part, that's because the projects came alive at night, especially during the summer. With so few residents working, most slept during the heat of the day and came out after dark. "You'd think it was midday at midnight. Everyone was out barbecuing, partying on the porches. And you were always hearing gunfire."

All this was happening in places built to eradicate slums, whose immorality had so shocked progressives a century ago. Not surprisingly, real-estate development in the neighborhoods surrounding the projects was essentially nonexistent for decades, though the rest of the city boomed, say Atlanta development officials.

For Glover, the projects were clearly a "toxic environment" to be leveled—and she proceeded to do it. Starting with grants from the Clinton-era Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and then using private financing, she reduced the city's 14,000 public-housing units to 2,000, most of them in complexes for the elderly. Gone were crime-ridden projects like Bowen Homes—immortalized in a rap lyric by the Shop Boyz: "My hood I love them ladies, / My hood I love them babies, / I can't forget my niggas, / Bowen Homes we love you baby!" Glover then leased the land to private developers, who built apartment and townhouse complexes there; in return, the developers agreed to dedicate 40 percent of the new units to tenants who qualified for public housing. Two-fifths of the projects' residents relocated to these "mixed-income" complexes. The remaining three-fifths received housing vouchers and used them to move into other private apartment buildings.

Such "vouchering-out" has happened elsewhere—notably in Chicago, after the infamous Robert Taylor Homes and other South Side high-rises were knocked down. But the AHA, using special autonomy that the George W. Bush–era HUD granted it under a program called Moving to Work, imposed a unique requirement on both the voucher recipients and the tenants of

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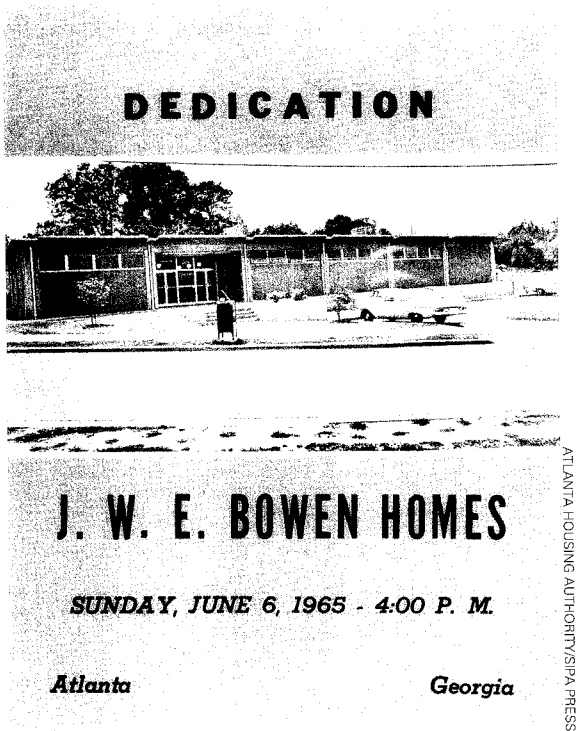
the new mixed-income complexes: as of 2004, they had to work (or be enrolled in a genuine limited-time training program). Today, the AHA is the only housing authority in the United States to require its beneficiaries, like recipients of cash welfare, to work. Those not working risk losing their right to a subsidized apartment. Further, the management of both the mixed-income complexes and the ordinary apartment buildings where vouchers are used have broad discretion to kick out tenants for not working or misbehavior. Over the past two years, the AHA reports, 109 tenants have been evicted for failing to comply with the work requirement and another 67 for criminal activity.



ATLANTA HOUSING AUTHORITY/SIPA PRESS

Bowen Homes, another project, opened with optimism in 1965 . . .

The AHA is clearly serious about changing the culture of those living in subsidized housing. And Glover may go even further: she is considering a "sunset" rule for AHA tenants—a time limit of the same kind that applies to welfare recipients. As the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* observes of Glover's initiatives: "For those who believe that the alternative to cradle-to-grave dependency on government is to give individuals incentive[s] to make responsible choices, Atlanta is a conservative's dream."

The success of the new complexes isn't assured. Though the buildings have been maintained well so far, the 60 percent of renters who pay the market rate may lose interest as the units age, especially if the surrounding neighborhoods lack amenities. The AHA has found, for instance, that major supermarkets are reluctant to open in neighborhoods near the new complexes—not because of fear of crime but because the median income remains too low.

On the other hand, knocking down the projects has surely benefited surrounding areas. The part of downtown Atlanta next to Centennial Homes, for example, has become a thriving nightlife hub. The Atlanta Development Authority reports that in and around areas redeveloped through the AHA, the assessed value of property has increased by some $1.1 billion since 1998. Glover has effectively unfrozen large tracts of Atlanta.

lover's tool kit includes much more than demolition, construction, and the work requirement, as complex and unusual as they are. Her least-known but most ambitious effort is what she unabashedly calls "human transformation," an effort to instill in the public-housing poor the habits needed to join the social and economic mainstream. Glover's memory of her childhood in the segregated South inspires the program. "We had a very strong and very strongly knitted community," she recalls. "There was never a day that passed that we didn't hear that we were being prepared to be the next leaders of the country."

To re-create that culture of ambition and discipline, the AHA has invested nearly $27 million in what amounts to intensive counseling for public-housing tenants. The counselors—twenty-first-century versions of the Victorian "friendly visitors" who sought to encourage independence among the poor—follow the relocated tenants to their new homes and check up on them there, verifying that they're employed or in school. They try to teach them the things that most Americans learn from their families:

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how to get a job and then get a better one; why it's important to meet your children's teachers and go to PTA meetings; how to live frugally and save for the future. It's a striking example of what political scientist Lawrence Mead calls "the new paternalism."

The troops in this war on dependency are employees of the Integral Youth and Family Project, a for-profit subsidiary of the leading private developer of complexes to replace Atlanta's projects. They are called "family support coordinators" (FSCs)—a sort of Peace Corps for the underclass—and are virtually all African-Americans in their twenties and early thirties. Some have made the journey out of public housing themselves. Kenya Tyson went from Atlanta's Harris Homes to Morehouse College and now counsels families who lived in the now-demolished Harris. Teaera Raines was raised by her grandparents in Macon, Georgia, after her parents succumbed to drug abuse; she went on to get a master's degree in management from Troy University.

One senses in the group the same spirit of pragmatic idealism that characterizes Teach for America and the KIPP Schools: the belief that people whom others have written off can be reached. Every day, the FSCs fan out in their own cars to visit three or four households relocated from the demolished projects. They give their cell-phone numbers to their "clients" and understand themselves to be on call at all times—including when the call concerns an angry boyfriend, domestic violence, or where to find shelter with the kids at midnight.

The FSCs are unblinking in describing the situations they see. There are horror stories, such as that of the seven-year-old who was sexually abused on a regular basis by his mother's live-in boyfriend, threatened suicide, and sprayed the household's food with Raid in an effort to kill his family. More common are the frustratingly casual attitudes that the FSCs encounter. Many households, the group tells me, have never paid bills for themselves: utility costs came with public housing, food stamps helped with groceries, and everything else was paid for in cash. Not surprisingly, the priority was to keep receiving benefits and, if possible, to increase them. That meant keeping live-in boyfriends—even if one was the father of a child in the household—off the lease, lest their income lead to a hike in rent. It also meant suggesting to school authorities that a child might have a learning disability—such a designation could bestow nearly $300 a month in Supplemental Security Income (SSI) on the household. (School officials are reportedly often eager to comply because excluding hard-to-teach students could boost schoolwide test results.)

Hope Boldon, executive director of the Integral Youth and Family Project, says that it was common for four generations of female-headed households to live this way in the projects, combining housing, Medicaid, SSI, and food stamps to "get over." That was originally a church expression for overcoming obstacles, one derived from the biblical account of crossing the river Jordan and immortalized in the old Mahalia Jackson hymn: "You know my soul look back in wonder / How did I make it over?" In its new, cynical usage, the phrase has become synonymous with successful hustles.

But as adept as those in the public-housing world have grown at maximizing government benefits, they're usually utterly unprepared to make their own way in life. As Raines puts it, "They basically say to us, 'You're trying to tell me to live a life I don't know anything about.'" Take a woman we'll call Darlene—a single mother of two teenage boys whom Pamela Elder, another FSC, began to visit six months before tenants left the soon-to-be-demolished Bankhead Courts. Darlene, a longtime employee of the fast-food chain Checkers, had recently been fired because of attitude problems. She wasn't an irresponsible mother; she insisted that her boys stay inside their apartment to avoid gang life. But neither was she ambitious for them. Asked what future she envisioned for the boys, Darlene said that they would "work at McDonald's or someplace like that" and then added, tellingly, "That's what we do."

Two years after Elder first visited Darlene, that defeatism has vanished. Once she moved from public housing into a subsidized private apartment—and faced the requirement to work—

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Darlene did indeed start working again. In fact, she has a far better job than she ever had: cleaning airplanes at Atlanta's international airport. ("I'd never even been on an airplane before," Darlene told Elder.) With her own circumstances and living situation improved, she has encouraged her sons, whom Elder describes as "smart" and "athletic," to stay in school, and the elder of the two has been nominated for a selective Atlanta program for public school students displaying leadership qualities and academic promise.

Most instructive about Darlene's story are the many steps over many months that helped it come to pass. Elder insisted that Darlene attend a job fair—to prepare for which Elder went to a local discount store, Value Village, to buy an outfit for her to wear, since Darlene had always worn either sweatpants or her fast-food uniform. Darlene had to give up her marijuana habit to pass her new employer's drug test and get the airport security badge that she now sports with pride. Elder taught her how to apply makeup and lip gloss, how to prepare for a job interview, and how to put together a résumé. Darlene, like all the clients, had to write down a "family wealth plan"—a list of goals ("educational, employment, family development, financial, health, and personal development") and "steps needed to achieve goals."

Such questions about goals and plans—which get at the essence of how to escape the underclass—didn't fall on immediately receptive ears. Urged to think about her future, Darlene erupted, "All that's easy for you to say—you're white!" The outburst stunned Elder, who was not only darker-skinned than her client but had herself been a teenage mother in Atlanta before earning a counseling degree from Georgia State. "Just because I'm married and drive a Honda Civic, now I'm white," she says. Her colleagues join her bemused laughter. I ask them whether, from the perspective of the projects, Barack and Michelle Obama are white. "Definitely," one says. "Success is white," says another, "except for athletes and rap stars." The FSCs' challenge is to make clear that in America, success isn't simply the result of privilege. Raines uses herself as an example: she tells her clients that "they can achieve, just as I did."

The stories don't always have happy endings, of course. Kenya Tyson describes one that "will stick with me for the rest of my life" involving a mother and her six children, formerly of the Hollywood Homes project. State officials took the children away from their mother because of her drug abuse; once the household was reunited, the father of the youngest four raped one of the older two, an act that the mother denies taking place, despite the daughter's pregnancy. The rape victim is now "making suicidal comments," says Tyson. "I am currently seeking an in-home certified and clinical counseling agency for the family to deal with these issues. I am also working diligently trying to get the daughter enrolled into an adult literacy class because she is 18 and can't read and write."

Urged to think about her future, Darlene erupted, 'All that's easy for you to say—you're white!'

The cost of the Integral Youth and Family Project is substantial. From 2002 to 2009, the AHA has paid it $26.7 million to work with 14,281 people. But that's a substantial percentage of metropolitan Atlanta's 81,000 black poor, meaning that the program has the potential not only to help individuals but to change broader social norms.

The statistical results are impressive, though it's impossible to determine which part of Glover's plan, the work requirement or the counseling, deserves more credit. The most recent figures show that 62 percent of AHA-supported household heads in Atlanta are employed. Before the recession, the figure had reached 70 percent. Recall that when Glover took over, it stood at 18.5 percent. A falling rate of attrition for those who fail to find work—in 2007, 23 percent of all voucher recipients were not

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recertified and left the program, a fraction that had declined to 12 percent by 2009—shows that the tenants have adjusted to the new standards, argues the AHA. "On so many occasions, people have said, 'Thank you for believing in us,' " says Glover. "So all of a sudden, we were into a completely different planning process because we were not planning for poor people who were incapable, who could not be responsible. We were in the process of planning for God's children."

One must be wary, though, of overstating the pace of change in Atlanta. In 2004, when Glover imposed the work requirement, tenants had spent an average of seven to eight years in projects and voucher-paid housing. That figure hasn't budged. In addition, police say that while violent crime in Atlanta has dropped steeply since the demolition of the projects, property crime has risen—a trend that Lieutenant Kreher attributes to the dispersion of voucher holders through the city.

It is also clear that even deep, long-term personal counseling can go only so far in repairing broken lives. Consider how the FSCs respond to an obvious suggestion: that they encourage their clients to marry, both to pool incomes and to provide fathers for boys apt to drift into gangs. Often, they say, fathers *are* present in the apartments they visit. One FSC does a quick count: fathers live in 17 of his 53 clients' homes. But he is reluctant to recommend marriage to his clients. Far too many of the men are "parasites" with criminal histories, I'm told; there remains the problem that marriage means putting a second person's name and income on a lease and thereby increasing the rent; and all too often, multiple fathers are involved, making the question of marriage far from straightforward. Only when pressed does the group agree that a married, two-income household might be one possible element of a "family wealth plan."

The conversation is a useful reminder that simply observing that low-income African-Americans would be better off in two-parent households cannot quickly make it so. This is a generational challenge—encouraging work and pushing the next generation to choose that path, perhaps thereby slowly increasing the pool of marriageable men.

America talks little about black underclass poverty these days, except indirectly: we hear about black unemployment, high rates of black incarceration, and the "black-white achievement gap" in education. As Nathan Glazer recently observed in *The American Interest*, "the installation of the first black President in American history . . . coincided with the almost complete disappearance from American public life of discussion of the black condition and what public policy might do to improve it." Or as the *Washington Post*'s Eugene Robinson writes, "entrenched black poverty, with all its causes and implications, barely makes a ripple in the public debate these days." The wonder is that Glover, through the unlikely vehicle of the Atlanta Housing Authority, has found a way to address it.

Those who would follow her example should be warned that her road has not been easy. For a housing authority to impose work requirements or time limits on tenants—or to put all federal aid into one big pot, to use as it sees fit for projects like "human transformation"—it needs HUD to give it Moving to Work status. And though some 3,000 public-housing authorities exist in the United States, HUD designated only 36 for Moving to Work in fiscal year 2010. Its latest budget proposes adding just three more.

Worse, California congresswoman Maxine Waters, an influential member of the House Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity (and currently under fire for alleged ethics violations), has proposed legislation to require one-for-one replacement of any public-housing units that are demolished—a law that would thwart any future Renee Glovers. "A further decline in the number of public housing units will only exacerbate the affordable housing needs of our most vulnerable populations," Waters wrote in a letter to HUD secretary Shaun Donovan. Donovan hasn't embraced the bill, but other ideas that HUD has cited approvingly could have similar effects. The 2009 stimulus bill, for instance, included funds to make "green" improvements to public housing; Boston plans $63 million of such projects. In the name of environmentalism, public housing, with all its social ills, may get patched together for another generation.

Glover's approach is also far from universally popular in Atlanta's black community. Academic

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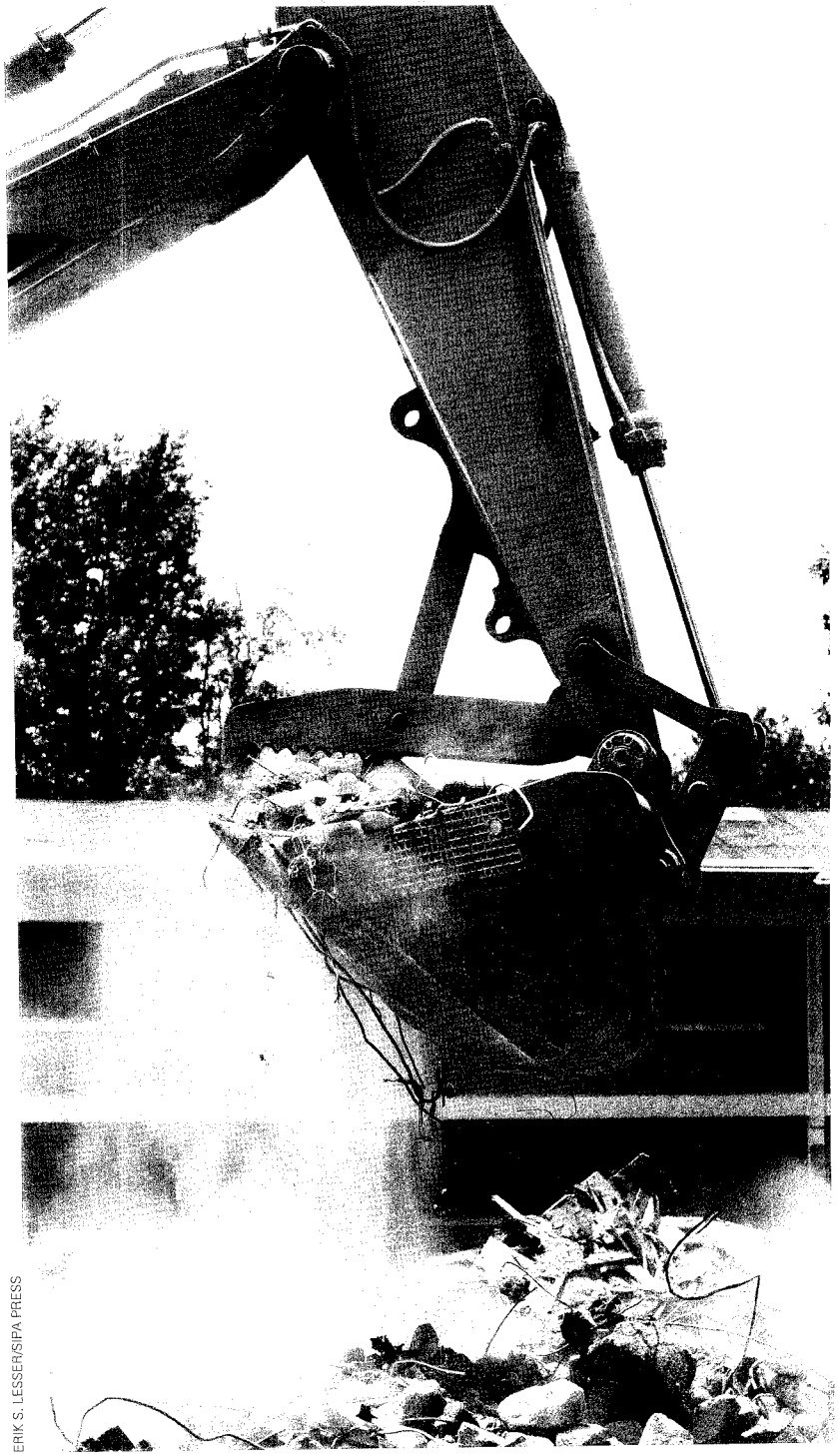
papers presented at an annual conference on the "state of black Atlanta" reflect a consistently skeptical stance. In one, a group of sociologists from Georgia State University worry that the city is engaged in "resegregation"—failing to relocate public-housing tenants into mixed-race neighborhoods. (The paper does concede that the households are moving into "less poor neighborhoods.") One discerns a familiar theme in such commentary: that the most important source of black poverty today is social barriers, such as segregation, not dysfunctional behavior.



ERIK S. LESSER/SIPA PRESS

. . . and, after years of violent crime, was demolished in 2009.

y contrast, Glover has revived the moribund tradition of black self-help. Her allies have been the city's black elite: the mayors, city council members, school boards, and CEOs of America's leading African-American city. In this, her work recalls the early-twentieth-century Urban League, through which cities' established black leaders sought to acculturate and uplift the formerly rural poor who had formed (and arguably remain) the core of the underclass. It happens that 1920s Atlanta had the first Urban League chapter in the South, led by the president of Morehouse College and the black-owned Standard Life Insurance Company. It was dedicated, according to a 2005 history by Alton Hornsby and Alexa Henderson, to helping the "ill-housed, underfed, unemployed or under-employed," as well as those "suffering from some other manifestation of maladjustment." That's a pretty good approximation of what Glover and the AHA are up to today.

One even hears echoes in Glover's words of a once-famous lecture delivered in Atlanta in 1895. Much of what Booker T. Washington said in his famous "compromise" speech at the Atlanta Exposition might sound embarrassing in today's racial discourse. But his emphasis on work is deeply relevant to what Glover has set in motion more than a century later—just as it's deeply relevant to the welfare reform of the 1990s. Washington's ambitions for his people didn't extend to the professions or the presidency, and his tone is dated, but his essential point about the transformative power of work remains: "Our greatest danger is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands, and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labor."

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The Afghans of Fremont

Anxious, uprooted—and under surveillance

Judith Miller

The site of the Altamont Speedway, where four died and scores were injured in an infamous 1969 rock concert, isn't far from Fremont, the largest city in Alameda County, California. But the area has changed dramatically in 40 years. The raceway itself is long gone; so are the hippies, most of the farms, and the sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll culture. In their place, the first thing that a tourist might notice is that Fremont—along with other cities in this county just south of San Francisco Bay—now hosts enormous Indian, Pakistani, Vietnamese, and Chinese populations, as well as smaller clusters of a dozen other nationalities. In fact, this city of 217,000 is among the nation's most ethnically and culturally diverse. Some 136 languages are spoken at home by children who attend Fremont schools, according to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and white, native-born Americans constitute only 38 percent of the city's residents.

One of Fremont's most surprising and least accessible ethnic enclaves is its Afghan population, probably the largest in the Western world. To outsiders, the Afghans of Fremont seem to be a tight-knit community, faring relatively well in a new and very different place. But those who know them well see a more troubling picture. Though some Bay Area Afghans are enormously successful and have integrated fully into American life, many are not assimilating. Far too many exist in a state of suspended animation between Afghanistan and America—anxious, uprooted, belonging totally to neither culture, intensely competitive with one another but even more suspicious of outsiders. Among those concerned: local police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which have quietly intensified their scrutiny of the area's Afghan community, worried about possible ties with Islamic terrorism.

For people whose native country routinely makes front-page news, the Afghans of Fremont exist in relative obscurity. With a handful of exceptions, they hold no prominent posts in American political and cultural institutions and have no influential groups to lobby Washington or even city hall. There are no Afghan state senators, members of Congress, mayors, or even school board members. Many of the community's "spokesmen" speak mainly among themselves; the organizations that they represent have few members and are little more than good intentions on a business card. "In many ways, the community is still politically invisible," says Abdul Naseer Yasiri, a recent immigrant who heads the Afghan Cultural Association.

As a community, these Afghans are also enormously understudied, except by law enforcement. After 9/11, journalists descended on Fremont, writing stories about "Little Kabul"—a short strip along Fremont Boulevard, really little more than a grocery store, jewelry shop, bookstore, and a couple of clothing shops that sold such items as long-sleeved tunics and head scarves for women and native hats called *pakol* for men. In 2003, Fremont got another jolt of publicity when the young Afghan author Khaled Hosseini set part of his best-selling novel, *The Kite Runner*, in the Fremont area.

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LAURA ODA/BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

Fremont's "Little Kabul," the center of what may be the Western world's largest Afghan enclave

But media interest in the community soon waned. Basic facts about it remain murky—its size, for example. The census conducted a decade ago found only 3,400 Afghans in Fremont and 12,000 in the nine-county Bay Area. But Afghans and experts alike complain that this is a severe underestimate. Valerie J. Smith, a communications instructor at nearby California State University–East Bay, puts the number of Afghan refugees in northern California at 30,000, not counting their native-born children.

For refugees they are—from a country ravaged by a decade-long war against the Soviets in the 1980s, another decade of internecine warfare in the 1990s among rival Afghan ethnic groups, the oppression of the militant Taliban, and now an American war. In fact, since 1981, Afghans have been the world's single largest refugee population each year, accounting for at least a quarter of all refugees. "At the height of the Rwanda crisis in 1994, there were 2.3 million Rwandan refugees and 2.7 million Afghans," says Jeremy Hein, a sociology professor at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire. "When the Bosnia refugee crisis erupted in 1996, there were 893,000 Bosnian refugees but 2.7 million Afghans. In 2009, 1.9 million Iraqis were forced to leave their country, but there were still 2.8 million new Afghan refugees."

The refugees arrived in the U.S. in two main waves, Smith says: a post-Soviet-invasion influx from 1989 to 1993 of more highly educated Afghans, many of whom held senior government posts and professional jobs in Kabul; and a second, smaller wave from the late 1990s until now, which has included large numbers of Afghans from rural areas with little or no

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formal education, particularly widows and others classified by American immigration authorities as "women at risk." While the Afghans have assimilated into America faster than immigrants from, say, Mexico and El Salvador, says Jacob Vigdor, an economics and public policy professor at Duke University, their assimilation rates lag far behind those of immigrants from such Asian countries as South Korea, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

One reason for the Afghans' relatively slow assimilation is the fact that they *are* refugees. Typical immigrants "come largely for economic reasons and have stronger social and family networks," Hein points out. Refugees, by contrast, flee violence and emigrate because of a crisis, not because they yearn to come to the United States. "They're more concerned with Kabul than Fremont," he says. "The Afghan view of the world is a very small dot called California and another called New York, and large dots for Pakistan, Iran, and their relatives in any part of the world."

Explanations vary as to why Fremont became an Afghan hub. Mild weather was clearly a draw; several Afghans also told me that Fremont's tree-lined streets, two-story houses, and surrounding hills reminded them of their native land. Jonathan Curiel, a writer who covered the community for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, credits word of mouth among Afghans. "It felt safe in this calm suburb," adds Rona Popal, who left Afghanistan in 1977 and now heads the Afghan Coalition, one of the area's most effective Afghan social welfare groups. "And housing was cheap, particularly compared to New York City," she continues, referring to the Afghan community in Flushing, Queens, which some scholars say rivals Fremont's in size.

Afghans say that California's generous welfare benefits also played a role, along with the advice and support of several city and county officials, such as Suzanne Shenfil, director of Fremont's Human Services Department, whom they credit with having helped refugees form their own support groups. Though many first-wave immigrants held prestigious jobs in Afghanistan—doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers—their inability to speak English often disqualified them from comparable jobs in America. Several Afghans said that many men in the first wave preferred to keep their families on welfare rather than accept work they deemed degrading or unsuitable to their education and social status.

Perhaps it isn't surprising that the Afghans of Fremont are a highly traumatized community. For many of them, America's recent surge of forces in its protracted Afghanistan war has rekindled harrowing memories of their own flight. It has also generated fears that friends and loved ones back home may be killed—or, alternatively, that America may abandon them to corruption and extremism, as it did after the Soviets were expelled from Afghanistan in 1989. "Many Afghans are reliving the trauma of war for a second or even third time," says Popal.

Given their discomfort with the foreign policy of the country that has sheltered them but is still fighting in their former home and sometimes killing their friends and relatives left behind, many Fremont Afghans are reluctant to discuss politics with outsiders. The Afghanistan war is unpopular in much of this community, several Afghans told me. So, too, is President Hamid Karzai, despite the fact that he, like an overwhelming majority of the refugees in Fremont, is a Pashtun, Afghanistan's majority ethnic group.

David Haines, an anthropologist at George Mason University, argues that much of the chaos of Afghan society in America is due to the refugees' forced flight from their homeland, often under brutal circumstances. "Their relationship both to the U.S. and to the past has never really been resolved," he says. "So the past is not past, and when events shift on the ground in Afghanistan, all the memories and questions suddenly reemerge: 'Should I have left? Stayed? Done more?'"

In a study of the mental health status of 257 Afghan refugees (the most extensive psychological survey of this population to date), Carl Stempel, a sociologist at Cal State–East Bay, found an unusually high—45 percent—rate of post-traumatic stress disorder. And no wonder: 87 percent of those surveyed said that they had experienced "life-threatening situations"

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in Afghanistan or while fleeing; 78 percent said that a family member or close friend had been killed or badly injured; and 71 percent of men said that they had been held hostage and tortured.

Problems in the community are often hard to pinpoint because of what Mizgon Zahir Darby calls Afghans' culture of "silence and secrecy." Darby was just 18 when she founded a journal in which she hoped to discuss not only the strengths of Afghan culture—its enormous hospitality, care for elders, and loyalty to family—but also subjects considered taboo among Afghans, such as suicide, mental illness, rape, wife-beating, child abuse, gangs, and drug abuse among the young. Members of the community and even some relatives were shocked when she began writing about such woes. She had tarnished their *nang*—their honor—by exposing problems that Afghans believe are best dealt with privately, within the family (which has often meant not at all). Some called her an *Amreecayee*—an American—a term, she writes, "used to describe sell-outs in Afghan culture." Many Afghans here also use that term to describe those—traitors, as they see it—who have gone to Afghanistan to serve as translators for the American military.

Afghan assimilation rates lag far behind those of immigrants from such Asian countries as South Korea and Vietnam.

Fremont's Afghans are far from unified. A while back, Darby helped a group comprising five Afghan groups, led by Popal's Afghan Coalition, secure a small state grant to address the community's mental health problems. But infighting among the coalition members proved so intense that it took almost three years to sort out each group's role and share of the funds. Much of the time, lamented one observer, the groups were "at each other's throats."

The local police tread carefully with this secretive, suspicious community, whose experiences back in Afghanistan have made it understandably anxious about law enforcement. Most police clashes with Afghans involve what Craig Steckler, Fremont's police chief, calls "cultural" issues. Soon after he became chief, he remembers, a gang of young Afghans tried to oust officers on patrol from what they called their "tribal lands." "We had to spend some time reeducating them that no, actually, this was *our* territory and they had to respect *our* laws," he says.

Domestic abuse of women is rising by the day, says Najia Hamid, founder and executive director of the Afghan Elderly Association, a community group, but Afghans resist reporting such incidents. Ditto child abuse, Steckler adds: Afghans are often surprised to learn that what they consider ordinary discipline can be a crime in America. Afghan gangs keep the police busy as well. Members of one gang, which called itself SAG, for "Save Afghan Girls," took it upon themselves to protect the honor of young Afghan women by beating and harassing non-Afghans who tried to date them.

But Steckler's most pressing concern must be the one that neither he nor the Oakland-based Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) would discuss: their efforts to monitor the Afghan community for signs of radicalization. At least two sources said that the FBI-led task force is investigating several Afghan and Pakistani residents of Alameda County—specifically, young men believed to have been friendly with or related to Najibullah Zazi. Earlier this year, Zazi—a 25-year-old Afghan-born Pashtun and naturalized U.S. citizen—pleaded guilty to plotting with al-Qaida to carry out multiple bombings in the New York City subway system. Zazi grew up in Queens, not California. But one of the Afghans said to be under JTTF surveillance is one of Zazi's many cousins, a Bay Area resident said to have been in touch with him when he was traveling to New York to carry out the attack.

More broadly, the JTTF has been trying to assess how many young Afghans may be vulnerable to militant Islamism's seductive appeal.

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Complicating the task is the difficulty of distinguishing potentially dangerous militants from those attracted by the broader, nonviolent wave of interest in Islam that is now filling the mosques and Islamic centers on Fridays, especially with younger Afghans. A recent debate on the role of Islam in modern American life sponsored by the Afghan Cultural Society, for instance, attracted an audience of 300, many of them young.

When he is not managing his university's $300 million budget or flying to Afghanistan during college breaks to advise the Karzai government, Mohammad Qayoumi, president of Cal State–East Bay, is worrying about young Afghans. Qayoumi, one of the Afghan community's most prominent members, divides the community's second generation into three groups. The "unilingual," as he calls them, speak English but only pidgin Dari or Pashto. The "bilingual" thrive in both the Afghan and the American worlds. The third group, however, speaks only "half a language": having never really learned their parents' native tongue, they haven't learned to function well in American society either. Like so many other émigrés who are linguistically and culturally stranded, they often drift into the area's criminal underground—its drugs, gangs, and crime.

A widespread sense of alienation means that "there is potential for radicalization" in this third group, Qayoumi says. Curious about their own ethnic background, hungry for roots in a society and religion that they know little about, they are susceptible to recruitment by militants seeking to inculcate them into their own autocratic, intolerant brand of Islam. Portraying this interpretation as authentically Afghan, militants offer recruits the sense of belonging that they seek.

Fazl Ghani Mogaddedi, who publishes a quarterly newsletter in Fremont, shares Qayoumi's concern, though his analysis is slightly different: he identifies a clash between first-generation refugees and their far better assimilated sons and daughters, many of whom have never even visited Afghanistan. Curiosity about their religious and cultural heritage often prompts a search for identity, says Mogaddedi. As a result, some embrace what he calls the "superficial trappings of Islam" and, worse, violent interpretations of his faith. "I'm very worried about the radicalization of the young, and not just in this community."

Where, exactly, would this radicalization take place? Qayoumi says that the community's ten or so mosques, mostly Sunni, haven't helped the area's Afghans acquire a political voice and identity. Farid Younos, a professor of human-development studies and sociology at Cal State–East Bay, agrees that while local mosques "play a very important spiritual role," most "tend to stick to religious rather than political issues, despite the fact that politics and religion are not separate in Islam." In the 1990s, said several Afghans, the Zaytuna Institute, located in nearby Hayward, had a reputation for fostering radicalism, a charge that its representatives have denied. But most of its leadership is not Afghan, and its energies of late have been devoted to opening a Muslim college to train imams in Berkeley. In any case, law enforcement officials here and in New York say that most mosques are no longer prime centers of Islamist radicalization. Equally powerful, concluded a groundbreaking New York Police Department study by Mitchell Silber and Arvin Bhatt in 2007, is material on the Internet and pressure from peer groups.

The problem of "homegrown" terrorism resulting from radicalization in the U.S. is one that law enforcement officials are increasingly worried about. According to a new study by New York University's Center on Law and Security, 81 percent of the nearly 1,000 defendants in the 50 most high-profile terrorist plots prosecuted since 9/11 are homegrown Islamic militants. Of those prosecuted this year, more than half are U.S. citizens.

community in deep distress, torn between its allegiances here and in Afghanistan; a young generation estranged from its parents—these are the "building blocks" of radicalization, one expert says. Most Afghan-Americans are just seeking safer, richer lives, as have generations of immigrants before them. But police fear that pockets of extremism may take hold undetected in this cocoon of a community. For as the Zazi case shows, the same expert says, "you only need two or three radicalized people to foment terror."

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How the Road to Bell Was Paved

Not with good intentions but with the avarice of professional government bureaucrats

William Voegeli

Before this summer, even many Southern Californians had never heard of Bell, a modest Los Angeles suburb of 37,000 located near enough to the big city for views of the downtown skyscrapers. Then the *Los Angeles Times* ran a front-page story revealing that Bell's city manager, Robert Rizzo, was receiving a salary of $787,637, while the police chief got $457,000 a year and the assistant city manager made $376,288.

Overnight, Bell became America's most famous kleptocracy, featured in national publications and on network news programs. The quick resignations of the three hypercompensated civil servants failed to kill the story. Further efforts by *Times* reporters uncovered extravagant pay packages for other city employees, outlandish fringe benefits, and loans of public funds to city workers and favored businesses. The state attorney general filed a lawsuit against Rizzo and other Bell officials, while the Los Angeles County district attorney indicted him, the assistant city manager, and six current or former city council members on corruption charges. If none of those legal actions succeeds, taxpayers throughout California can expect to fund a pension for Rizzo worth $600,000 per year, according to the *Times*'s calculations, while the retired police chief makes ends meet on a pension of $411,000.

Bell's all-you-can-eat personnel policies are outrageous but not surprising. The abuse of power, after all, is an endemic political problem, one so old that it's often rendered in Juvenal's Latin: *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* Who will guard the guardians themselves?

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America's answer to that question made its republic distinctively successful. If ambition could be made to counteract ambition, in James Madison's formulation, then the guardians would guard one another, which was why Madison's Constitution incorporated checks and balances. Madison saw these, however, as especially vital to the success of a distant national government, expecting that Americans would pay careful attention to the conduct of their own state and local governments. That's exactly what Alexis de Tocqueville found during his trip through America 40 years later: "Municipal institutions constitute the strength of free nations. Town meetings are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they bring it within the people's reach, they teach men how to use and how to enjoy it."

Though fundamentally tawdry, the Bell scandal raises two important questions about the prospect of American self-government. First, can a post-Madisonian development in America—the professionalization of government that began a century ago—be reconciled to the Madisonian framework of counteracting ambitions? Second, can we still rely on conscientious civic engagement at the *local* level to be the elevating political force that Tocqueville applauded—and, if not, can our republic endure without it?

These are dilemmas much older than the plundering of one Los Angeles suburb. Even before the Constitution was 100 years old, America was undergoing profound changes that tested whether the political structures familiar to Madison and Tocqueville could continue to prevent the abuse of power. One of these changes was urbanization. The entire American population stood at just over 5 million people in 1800. By 1900, the three largest cities alone—Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York—had 6.4 million inhabitants.

The drivers of this population growth included waves of immigration, which transformed the homogeneous nation that Tocqueville analyzed into one of the world's most diverse. The proportion of the American population born in other countries peaked at 14.8 percent in 1890, half again as high as it had been in 1850. (The figure in the 2000 census was 11.1 percent.) Some 14 million people immigrated between 1860 and 1900, many from countries in eastern and southern Europe, where government was something done *to* people, not by them. The presence of millions of novice democrats leading economically precarious lives in crowded cities quickly gave rise to the shock-and-awe corruption of political machines, exemplified by New York's Tammany Hall.

These transformations convinced many Americans that it was no longer sufficient for the guardians to guard one other or realistic to believe that politically engaged citizens could scrutinize their behavior. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the progressive movement sought to solve the problem by making government, especially local government, less political. Regarding the superintendence of government as an essentially technical, rather than political, task, they decided to professionalize it.

Consider, in this light, Louis Brownlow, best known as the principal figure in the commission that President Roosevelt named in 1936—the Brownlow Committee—to reorganize the federal bureaucracy. Two years earlier, Brownlow had already weighed in on professionalization at the city level, welcoming changes that rendered municipal government "less legalistic, less partisan, and more technical." Thus, he said, "let whoever will be mayor, but the bacteriologist in the health department, the chemist in the water department, the superintendent of schools and his teachers, the nurses in the city hospital—these must be technicians." In large cities, professionals trained in the new discipline of public administration would run large departments and coordinate the provision of municipal services. In smaller ones, administration could be carried out by city managers, who "represent in their professional capacity" the "determination to keep the technical services of local government 'out of politics,'" according to Brownlow.

The first of these city managers had been hired in 1906 by Staunton, Virginia. Soon the "council-manager plan" became the dominant template for governing small and medium-size cities. In that structure, the elected city council answers to a town's citizens in the way that a corporation's board of directors answers to its shareholders. The city manager, in turn, resembles a

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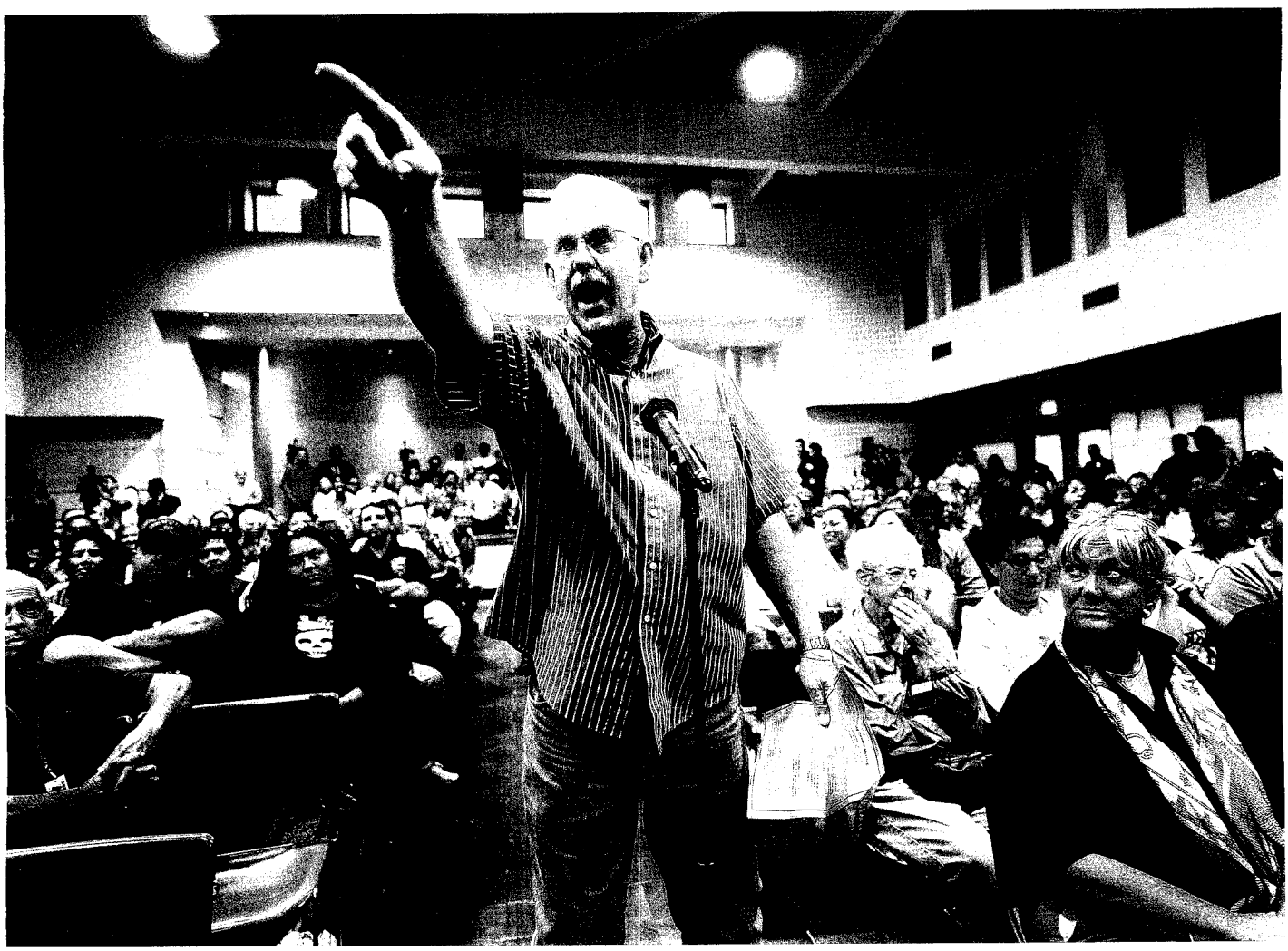

Too little, too late: only in July, after Bell's salary scandal erupted, did citizens shake off their historical apathy.

chief executive officer: a professional administrator who manages the delivery of public services, hired by and reporting to the city council.

ike the members of any profession, city managers are jealous about their reputation, and they rallied to defend themselves after the Bell story broke. An organization of public administrators in Los Angeles County published a letter less than a week after the initial *Times* story, contending that Bell's government salaries were "outrageous and a huge aberration." Girard Miller, a *Governing* columnist, wrote: "The vast majority of America's public officials and public employees are more likely to be underpaid, not overpaid. In thousands of communities across America, most public officials, public managers and millions of public servants earn every penny of salary they receive. We need to curb the extreme abuses and go no further."

The problem, however, is more fundamental than a few bad apples among legions of diligent officials. What Louis Brownlow welcomed,

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James Madison feared: a "will in the community independent of the majority" could, wrote Madison, embrace and act on "unjust views." The very word "professional" points us to the great problem with the professionalization of government: though it can refer to a person with extensive training and expertise, it also distinguishes, from "amateur," a person who performs activities for a living—for money. In the geography of public administration, a slippery slope separates the idealistic and rigorous from the self-serving. The calling begets a guild, which turns into a mutual protection society and winds up a racket.

For evidence of the racket, look to the documented cases of battered-taxpayer syndrome on the rise in places far from Bell. The Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association, whose website declares that it has "one, constant focus—putting children at the center of education," sued the city's school district this year, demanding that it make erectile-dysfunction drugs like Viagra available through the teachers' health insurance. The school board estimates that complying with the demand would cost as much as hiring a dozen entry-level teachers.

In Illinois, local officials are virtuosos in the art of "pension spiking." The *Chicago Tribune* reports that the 55-year-old administrator of Bellwood, a predominantly black, working-class suburb just outside Chicago, retired this year with a pension of $252,689—based on a salary of $472,255 in 2009, boosted from $168,593 in 2005. In his final year of employment, this frantic go-getter was paid under *ten* different job titles. At the same time, one of the state's most affluent cities, Highland Park, paid three park officials bonuses worth almost $700,000 as they got ready to retire. One 58-year-old official will receive a pension of $166,000—more than he ever made as an executive with the parks district until his final months on the job.

Back in California, the struggles of two public-administration students interning with a city council candidate in Orange County suggest the existence of related abuses in the state, less extreme but more common than Bell's. According to Fred Smoller, the Brandman University professor directing the students' program, it took them "nearly four months and hundreds of hours of work" to complete what should have been a simple project: gathering data on how much local city managers were paid. "While several cities cooperated, many others gave the students the runaround," says Smoller. "Two cities charged for access to this information. Two others said that the public was not entitled to know the details of city-official compensation packages." Several local officials, according to Smoller and the city council candidate, threatened the professor and his students, saying that publicizing the salary information would be a bad career move.

Some argue that the Bell story has less to do with the dangers of professionalizing government than with the town's demographics. More than half of Bell's residents are foreign-born (mostly from South and Central America), and nearly two-thirds over the age of 25 lack a high school diploma. Perhaps its residents were as vulnerable to Rizzo's exploitation as Manhattan tenement dwellers once were to Boss Tweed's. *Los Angeles Times* columnist George Skelton accused the Rizzo gang of "ripping off vulnerable, uninformed taxpayers in one of the county's poorest cities, exploiting their public trust and, sadly, apathy." A crucial point on the road to the scandal was a 2005 special election in which residents voted to make Bell's local government exempt from state laws on municipal compensation. The turnout in that election was fewer than 400 people—less than 5 percent of Bell's registered voters.

But the incidents in Milwaukee, Bellwood, Highland Park, and Orange County suggest that the reassuring explanation—that Bell's problems are due to unique circumstances; that those of us who live in more educated communities could never be fleeced by a manipulator like Rizzo—isn't correct. They remind us that guarding the guardians has become harder everywhere.

For one thing, if "town meetings are to liberty what primary schools are to science," as Tocqueville had it, then America has a long-term, worsening dropout problem. Apathy isn't confined to poor or immigrant communities. Indeed, the word "community" is increasingly used, contrary to the term's long history, to denote people who attend to things they have in common other

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than the affairs of the particular geographic location where they reside. Our time, attention, and affinities are not limitless, so as we increasingly concern ourselves with the environmentalist community, the bluegrass-music community, or the office-supplies wholesalers' community, we have less left over for the patch-on-the-map communities where we live. Our waking hours are enveloped by communications technologies that Madison and Tocqueville couldn't have imagined; we are a polity turned inside-out, familiar with the distant and estranged from the nearby. Americans are likelier to know the names of the president's pets than to know those of their own city council members.

We rely on the media to conduct the due diligence that they distract us from doing ourselves. The Bell story was featured in the *Los Angeles Times* every day for weeks, and the journalists who broke it can start working on their Pulitzer acceptance speeches. But the *Times*, like all daily newspapers and television and radio stations, has only a fraction of the reporters, revenues, and resources that it once did. Had the Rizzo gang postponed its assault on Bell's treasury until after a few more rounds of *Times* layoffs—or had it picked a more distant city to plunder, one policed by a mom-and-pop weekly instead of a metropolitan daily—its members might have retired happily and lavishly without ever having to answer for it.

In the geography of public administration, a slippery slope separates the idealistic and rigorous from the self-serving.

The final lesson from the Bell story is that professionalism can do only so much good, and a considerable degree of harm, in obliging a government to control itself. Many educators, public safety and health officials, and administrators are professionals in the best sense, motivated by a sense of duty and a desire to serve the public honorably. In the absence of an avalanche of stories about other Bells, we can hope that only a small minority are professionals in the worst, most rapacious, sense of the term.

There's a group in the middle, however. They may employ their professional training and specialized technical knowledge to solve problems, but they're not above using such know-how to stifle criticism or impede scrutiny. Having chosen careers devoted to the public welfare, they lose the ability to distinguish what's good for the public from what's good for their own careers. They're not necessarily cynical when they insist that it's for the sake of schoolchildren that teachers must receive virtually automatic tenure after three years on the job. They may mean it when they say that the public sector cannot attract and retain the personnel it needs without offering health, retirement, and job-security benefits found nowhere else in the American economy. But being sincere isn't the same as being right.

Yielding so much of the political space once occupied by elected officials to "disinterested experts"—who sometimes turn out to be neither—has harmed governance and civic engagement. This contention requires no illusions about the virtues of elected politicians. Having grown up in Chicago during the final years of America's last graft- and patronage-based big-city machine, I understand the point of having a trained chemist monitoring the safety of the city's drinking water, instead of handing the lab coat and test tubes to some alderman's idiot nephew. Even as we cannot count on the guardians to guard themselves, however, we cannot rest assured that the professionals will professionalize themselves. Neither advanced degrees nor mid-career training programs that include ethics refresher courses will banish the danger that power will be abused.

The problem of power is inherently a political rather than a technical one. To survive, self-government requires citizens who understand that their rights are never finally secure and that their civic duties can never be safely delegated.

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Weimar Istanbul

Illustrations by Paul Pope

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Dread and exhilaration in a city on the verge of political catastrophe

Claire Berlinski

The City grew rapidly, dwarfing in size and population any other in the country. The streets stimulated like cocaine; horns honked, crowds surged, nerves jangled. To step outside was to be electrified by the harlequinade of roaring colors, bright lights, rushing traffic. Sybaritic nightclubs thrummed until dawn and well thereafter; strange and perverse sights were to be found on every boulevard, in every alley, at every hour, the aesthetic of contradiction between civilization and barbarity heightened by the ersatz baroque of the old architecture and the shocking ugliness of the new. Transvestites prowled, thieves

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pickpocketed, and in the fashionable cafés, intellectuals smoked furiously and complained of their anomie.

The Old World had vanished, and with it its agrarian economy, its reassuring class distinctions and social order. An alien and fragile political order had been imposed in its place. Experimental music, art, and cinema flourished; fascinations arose with utopianism, fortune-telling, mysticism, communism.

But there was at once a paranoid mood, a sense of impending doom. Markers of the City's great imperial past evoked its former glory while proving its decline. The art of the epoch was fueled by the fear of imminent crisis and breakdown. Decadent American culture was hungrily emulated, passionately deplored. Painters produced works genuinely shocking to the eye; writers wrote novels so offensive to bourgeois sensibilities as to provoke threats of murder. A misogynistic terror of women dominated cultural and political debate: Had modernity destroyed their virtue?

If the City was now the undisputed capital of the region's commerce and industry, all remembered the horror of hyperinflation, which had obliterated the fruit of lifetimes of hard work, and all remembered with contempt the feuding coalition governments whose incompetent stewardship had brought the nation to ruin. The economy's recent growth was vertiginous but precarious, funded by overseas loans that massively increased the nation's debt. Unemployment rose and rose. A poorly understood global economic crisis fueled dark conspiracy theories. Daily political violence lent to life a pervasive feeling of menace. The newspapers overflowed with right-wing propaganda. Screaming headlines reported violent clashes in the streets. Intellectuals were assassinated.

The constitution was new and weak, lacking legitimacy and vulnerable to subversion. Many in the City believed that foreign powers were conspiring to weaken and humiliate the nation. Most were cynical about democratic experiments; all were revolted by the selfishness and corruption of their political parties. The cravenness of the industrialists and the business class provoked widespread disgust with capitalism itself. Many yearned for, many openly demanded, a more authoritarian government. Europe, America, and particularly the Jews—those sinister, infinitely powerful magicians—were blamed for the City's discontents.

A shouting demagogue, having once been arrested for his extremist views, now focused on legal methods of attaining power. He would restore the nation to its former glory, he promised. Intellectuals thought him a ruffian and a buffoon.

The City was proud: it was the new vanguard, the greatest metropolis in the world! It was ashamed: look at what had been lost, how ugly it had become! The City "delighted most, terrified some, but left no one indifferent, and it induced, by its vitality, a certain inclination to exaggerate what one saw." So Peter Gay described Weimar Berlin.

But his descriptions, as do all of these, might have been written about the Istanbul in which I live. There is a spookiness to living in a city at the epicenter of an impending political catastrophe, a mood of dread but also of astonishing vitality—economic, creative, artistic. It is a distinctive mood and, to anyone acquainted with history, a familiar mood.

There is, it seems, such a phenomenon as a Weimar City.

What is a Weimar City? It is a city rich in history and culture, animated by political precariousness and by a recent rupture with the past, vivified by a shocking conflict with mass urbanization and industrialization; a city where sudden liberalization has unleashed the social and political imagination—but where the threat of authoritarian reaction is always in the air.

Weimar Cities are not freaks of nature. They may be expected to arise under certain social, political, and historical circumstances. World War I destroyed both Imperial Germany and the Ottoman Empire. The remnants of both entities succeeded in imposing alien new social orders on themselves, fragile experiments in democracy. The Turkish Republic has lasted far longer than the Weimar Republic, but the stories do not differ in the fundamentals; they have merely been telescoped or expanded by contingent events.

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With the rise to power in 2002 of the Justice and Development Party, or AKP, the Turkish Republic has experienced a fresh convulsion. The AKP opened the Pandora's box of political Islam. It has presented its reforms as an exercise in liberalization. In a sense, this is true: religion as a political force had, since the founding of the Republic, been repressed. In another sense, it is not true at all: this particular political force is one that, by its nature, tends ultimately to erase liberal reforms. "Democracy is like a streetcar," Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, now prime minister, said infamously in 1995. "When you come to your stop, you get off."

Turkey is now in the throes of two revolutions. The social transformations over which Mustafa Kemal Atatürk presided have not yet been assimilated; simultaneously, something new—and old—has rushed up to challenge them. The ancient order is thus disappearing doubly. Cultures, it would seem, react in particular ways to the disappearance of ancient orders. The febrile characteristics of Weimar Cities appear at just such times—the in-between times. As fever is a sign of disease, so it is a sign of social dislocation.

Weimar Cities have emerged, blazed, and died throughout history. The sack of Rome and the fall of the Empire prompted Augustine to write *The City of God*, the work itself an emblematic admixture of the anxiety and creativity that marked the epoch. Constantinople before the fall was consumed with evil prophecies and the well-founded fear that Byzantine culture was as doomed as it was glorious. A similar mood possessed the extravagantly genteel elite of antebellum Charleston. Moscow and Saint Petersburg in 1917 were cities of this sort, marked by the kinetic creative energy that accompanies the belief that the forces of history will soon somehow sweep away the past. The tortured intellectual blossoming of Vienna at the turn of the century was intimately connected with a sense of helplessness about the city's fate, which all who lived there understood was not in their hands. The currency crash of 2002 prompted a creative efflorescence in Buenos Aires. San Francisco during the Summer of Love was a Weimar City, Hunter S. Thompson's famous Wave Speech a characteristic signature: "There was madness in any direction, at any hour. If not across the Bay, then up the Golden Gate or down 101 to Los Altos or La Honda. . . . You could strike sparks anywhere."

All were cities marked by voluptuous excess, excitement, and fear, but the archetype, of course, is Berlin in the twenties. "There is no city in the world so restless as Berlin," recalled the diplomat Harold Nicolson:

> Everything moves. The traffic lights change restlessly from red to gold and then to green. The lighted advertisements flash with the pathetic iteration of coastal lighthouses. The trams swing and jingle. . . . In the Tiergarten the little lamps flicker among the little trees, and the grass is starred with the fireflies of a thousand cigarettes. Trains dash through the entrails of the city and thread their way among the tiaras with which it is crowned. The jaguar at the zoo, who had thought it was really time to go to bed, rises again and paces in its cell. For in the night air, which makes even the spires of the Gedächtniskirche flicker with excitement, there is a throbbing sense of expectancy. Everybody knows that every night Berlin wakes to a new adventure. Everybody feels that it would be a pity to go to bed before the expected, or the unexpected, happens. Everyone knows that next morning, whatever happens, they will feel reborn.

The Turkish Republic has lasted far longer than the Weimar Republic, but the stories do not differ in the fundamentals.

Could there be such excitement without danger? I doubt it. Never was the Weimar Republic viewed as legitimate by its enemies, and never has the secular state been viewed as

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legitimate by its enemies here. Both societies have been destabilized in turn by leftist subversion, right-wing militias, assassinations, endless coup plots, the savage repression of protests and strikes. The Nazis evoked nostalgia for a social and moral past that they proposed to restore, and so does Turkey's AKP government. Just look at the map of the Ottoman Empire, say its diplomats. Turkey is returning to its rightful place.

Berlin in the twenties was a polyglot city, struggling to absorb immigrants: Jews from the east, Russians fleeing the revolution. So, too, Istanbul, swollen with mass migration from the east, large populations of Kurds, and refugees from the many nearby conflict zones: Iraq, the Balkans, Afghanistan, Chechnya. Berlin had only the most limited power of assimilation; ethnic violence was always close to the surface. It was no melting pot, and neither is Istanbul, as recent headlines here suggest: KURDISH REBELS ADMIT ISTANBUL BUS BOMBING. STRATEGY EXPERT WARNS OF ETHNIC CLASHES. ETHNICALLY POLARIZED SOCIETIES EASY TARGETS FOR PROVOCATEURS.

Christopher Isherwood, the great chronicler of interwar Berlin, brought to literary life Fräulein Schroeder, the petite bourgeoise pining for her former comforts and nostalgic for a vanished epoch. The new city seemed to her brutish, ill-mannered, overrun. She is a familiar fixture in Istanbul; I have met many Fräulein Schroeders here. *How much more civilized this city was*, they tell me, *before these uncultured mobs descended upon it, like ants.*

If Berlin was characterized by an endless number of political tribes, movements, and causes, from free love to vegetarianism; an endless number of social experiments, from nudism to yoga; and an endless number of artistic styles, from the *neue Sachlichkeit* to the twelve-tone row; so, too, is Istanbul. My e-mail in-box is full of invitations to join Vipassana meditation courses, Reiki retreats, concerts, openings of new galleries, and, above all, rallies—rallies for the liberation of transsexuals, rallies for the liberation of Gaza, rallies against the rape of animals (of all things). And at all these rallies, one finds the police, flanked like centurions, with their truncheons, shields, and gas masks at the ready.

Since Turkey's return to civilian government following the 1980 military coup, constraints on individual rights, economic and political activity, and the institutions of civil society have been loosened. Under the AKP, restrictions on broadcasting in the Kurdish language have been lifted. The death penalty has been abolished. The National Security Council has been given a civilian majority and its role downgraded. Military judges have been replaced by civilian ones in the State Security Courts. International human rights conventions have been given primacy over domestic Turkish law.

Many of these reforms may be, as critics have long charged and as I increasingly agree, a Trojan horse, motivated by the AKP's yearning to eradicate the military's power and thus the primary obstacle to the party's domination over every aspect of Turkish society. They have nonetheless prompted the sense that a genie has been released from the bottle, for good or ill.

Still, the AKP gives with one hand and takes away with the other: the concentration of the media in the hands of government cronies has dramatically contracted press freedom, as has the government's persecution of journalists and its use of punitive taxation to bring dissenting elements into line. Everyone here believes his phone to be tapped. When I meet critics of the government for lunch, they remove their cell-phone batteries. They think it's harder for the spies to hear them that way.

The sprawling Ergenekon case has resulted in wave after wave of predawn arrests. Ergenekon is said to be a shadowy ultranationalist clique behind a series of bombings, the assassination of journalist Hrant Dink, a shooting at the Council of State, and a grenade attack on a left-wing newspaper. The government claims that Ergenekon planned to assassinate the prime minister, murder Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk, shoot down Greek fighter planes, and bomb mosques packed with worshipers as a pretext for staging a coup. Hundreds of writers, generals, and opposition politicians have been detained on suspicion of involvement in this nebulous conspiracy. Many have languished for years without trial.

The accused say that Ergenekon is fictitious. "This is 100 percent political," one defendant's

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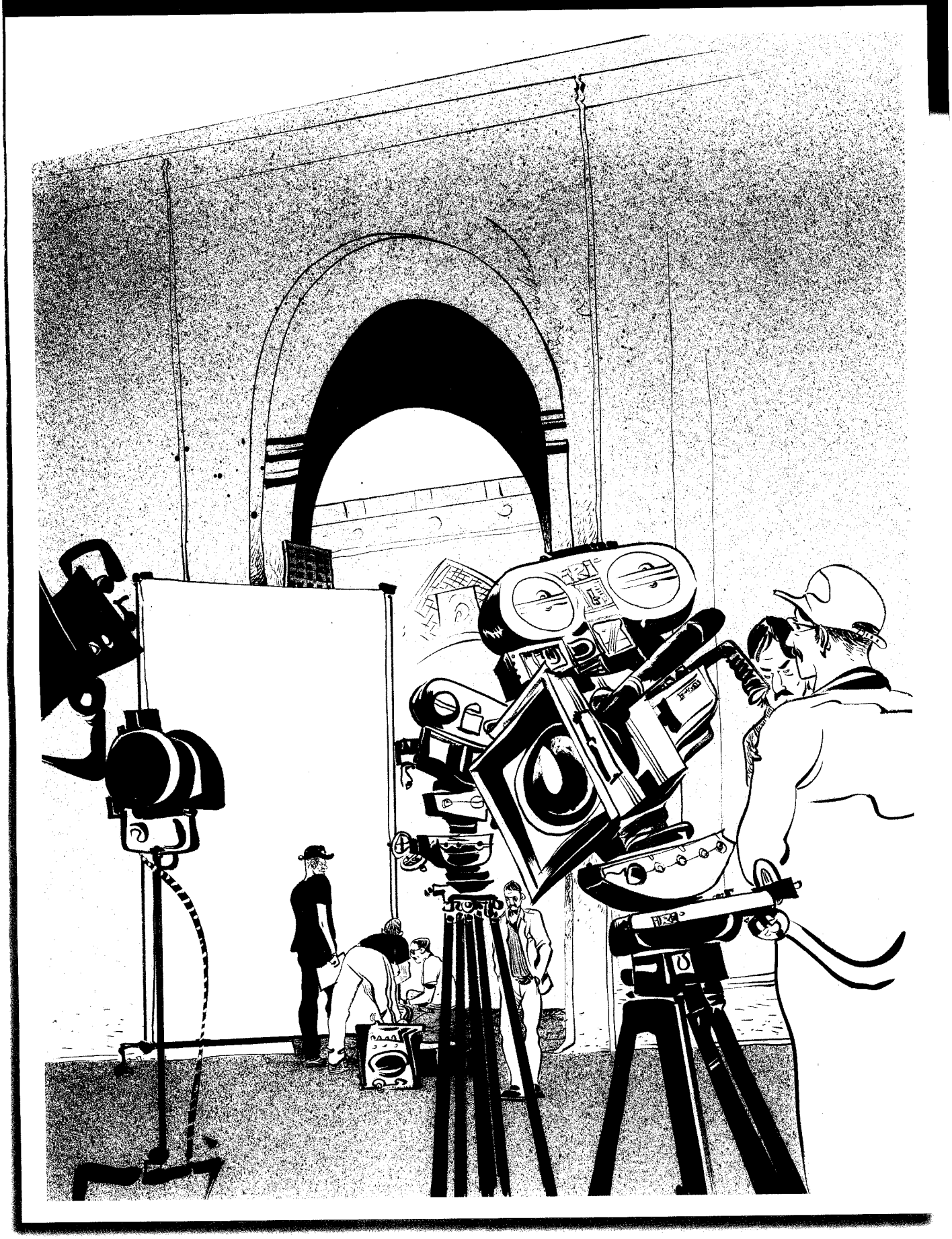

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lawyer said. "It has all been cooked up by the government and by the imperialist powers, the CIA, Mossad, and the Jewish lobby and the European Union, to eliminate Turkish nationalism." The only belief that unites this fractured society is that the Jews are somehow to blame. Whether Ergenekon is real or Erdoğan's answer to the Reichstag fire, I cannot say; it is surely true that many have been arrested and that many more are terrified.

There is clearly something about the moment when an authoritarian society begins to liberalize that makes it unusually fragile. Fragile because democratic political concepts are new and alien; fragile because inexperienced democracies are prone to misadventures; and fragile because, in the case of both Weimar Germany and modern Turkey, there were serious and perhaps fatal flaws in the very way that the democratic experiment was conceived, flaws embodied in both nations' weak, disputed constitutions. Simultaneously, these cultures were and are magnificently expressive and creative precisely *because* the process of liberalization and democratization unleashes vibrant energies, hitherto suppressed. Powerful emotions inspire powerful art. To live in these political circumstances is to experience emotions beyond the normal range, to perceive life in more dramatic terms.

The loosening of formal censorship has given rise to a tulip craze in the Istanbul art world. New galleries open daily. The prices reported at auctions are spectacular; the value of the art-auction market here has quadrupled in the past eight years. "It makes so much sense that Turkey should be the next big thing," says Kerimcan Güleryüz, art director of Istanbul's avant-garde Galeri x-ist. "It's not an accident. We have the key to the issues the world is going to be struggling with for the next 25 years. We're the remains of an empire, the residue of this humongous problem the world is going to have to come to grips with. It's East versus West at its fundamental core."

There is something, too, about the richness of Turkish and German culture and history that allows both to become exceptionally dynamic under the right conditions. There is, after all, a tradition on which to build. And there is something about both nations' histories and collective political temperaments that makes them vulnerable to extreme nationalism, authoritarianism, and anti-Semitism, particularly when an ambient dread of "irresponsible elements" and "decadent forces" takes hold. Psychoanalysts might look to family structures in both cultures, particularly the domineering role of fathers. But these theories are not easy to prove.

It is all too easy to draw analogies between any society under an authoritarian threat and interwar Germany. But the parallels here go beyond the standard hyperbole. They are eerie—even down to the obsession with the imagined iniquity of the treaties that marked the end of World War I: for Germans, the Treaty of Versailles; for Turks, the Treaty of Sèvres, which dismembered the Ottoman Empire and assigned the spoils to the Allies. In Istanbul, it is as if that humiliating treaty had been signed but yesterday.

There is another important parallel: the memory of hyperinflation. Such a trauma, it appears, persists in imagination long after the real risk is gone, leaving democracies shaky in its wake. Weimar's hyperinflation took place between 1921 and 1923, a full ten years before Hitler's rise to power. It ended completely with the introduction of the rentenmark in 1923. Yet Hitler's skillful exploitation of the memory of that event was an important part of the formula that allowed him to rise to power. It was hyperinflation and the inability of Turkey's feuding, self-interested political parties to restore economic order that brought the AKP to power—not Islam, as is commonly believed. Overwhelmingly, voters chose the AKP because they believed it to be the party best able to stabilize the economy. In a sense, the voters were right: able at last to dominate the parliament, the AKP brought inflation under control, continuing an economic recovery program launched by their predecessors in 2001. It is essential to grasp the significance of the memory of economic bedlam when trying to understand what's happening now in Turkey.

But as in Weimar, the government's displays of official prowess ineffectively mask the real chaos on the streets, the fear that society is

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turning and turning in the widening gyre. AKP governance is marked by show and vanity. In my neighborhood is a proudly renovated Ottoman fountain, very pretty to look at and adorned with a sign: RENOVATED BY THE AKP MUNICIPALITY. It does not convey water. Typical AKP. That the city is not only on a political fault line but on a literal one adds to the mood; when the earthquake comes—and it will—much of Istanbul will collapse because the AKP has done little to crack down on corrupt, lax, and dangerous construction practices. The government has produced slick, doorstop-size earthquake-preparation plans, but these have little to do with any preparations actually made.

I do not wish to make *too* much of this parallel. Turkey is not headed inexorably toward Weimar's fate. Nothing in history is inevitable. Nor am I suggesting that the creative culture of contemporary Istanbul is as brilliant and historically significant as that of Weimar. Feverish and fecund, yes; marked by genius, only rarely. Nor, certainly, am I saying that Erdoğan is a new Hitler. He is increasingly a disturbing figure, but *that*—no, that's much too far. The point I am making is that one may now feel in Istanbul a particular mood, a curious admixture of dread and thrill, and that this mood is familiar and that this mood is no accident.

There go the bearded ninjas down the street in their jihadimobiles, yelling slogans about the liberation of Palestine.

What does it feel like to live in a Weimar City? Consider the mad optimism of my neighbors, who have just opened a luxurious wine boutique down the street from my apartment. Who invests that kind of money in renovating and stocking a massive cellar, in importing champagne, port, and sherry, in the middle of an Islamic revolution? The number of licenses granted for the sale of alcohol has sharply contracted, even though Turkey's population is growing. Alcohol bans are spreading throughout the city. Yet when I walk past this gleaming boutique and take in the elegant stone floors, the sleek, varnished hardwoods and marble, the tasting tables and tasting kits and the in-house sommelier and the 1,200 bottles of wine glowing in their illuminated cabinets, it seems absurd to ask whether Turkey has been lost to the West. I am reassured until I turn the corner, and then—not so fast! There goes the caravan of bearded ninjas screaming down the street in their jihadimobiles, yelling slogans about the liberation of Palestine. I keep walking down the block and am whipsawed with this confusion a dozen times before I reach the traffic light.

The conflict between the ancient, the modern, and the reaction is in evidence everywhere here, especially in the small, weird details. Pneumatic drills—the sound of economic growth—play a constant counterpoint to the shouts of street hawkers and the call of the muezzin. The barracks of the imperial military have been purchased by investors and refashioned as the W Hotel, its décor—aquamarine lighting, an efflorescence of strange chrome spears—a campy hybrid of neo-Ottoman and neo–Stanley Kubrick: think *Sultan Mehmed V: A Space Odyssey*. The rooms come complete with "intimacy kits" containing condoms. Perhaps you should use them, too, because the government takes a dim view of foreign sperm. Women who leave the country for artificial insemination are to be prosecuted.

Istanbul's thrilling skyline, a glittering ribbon of palaces, mosques, and minarets, forms the backdrop to the sinister glamour of its rooftop nightclub scene, where the city's privileged youths pass their summer nights spending their fathers' money. I have rarely in the West seen promiscuity such as that which characterizes Istanbul's elite, secular class. Come the Revolution, they will surely be shot. Yet the women complain to me, in tears, that they cannot understand why the men they bed never call the next day. *The poor things*, I think. *They are so new to this.*

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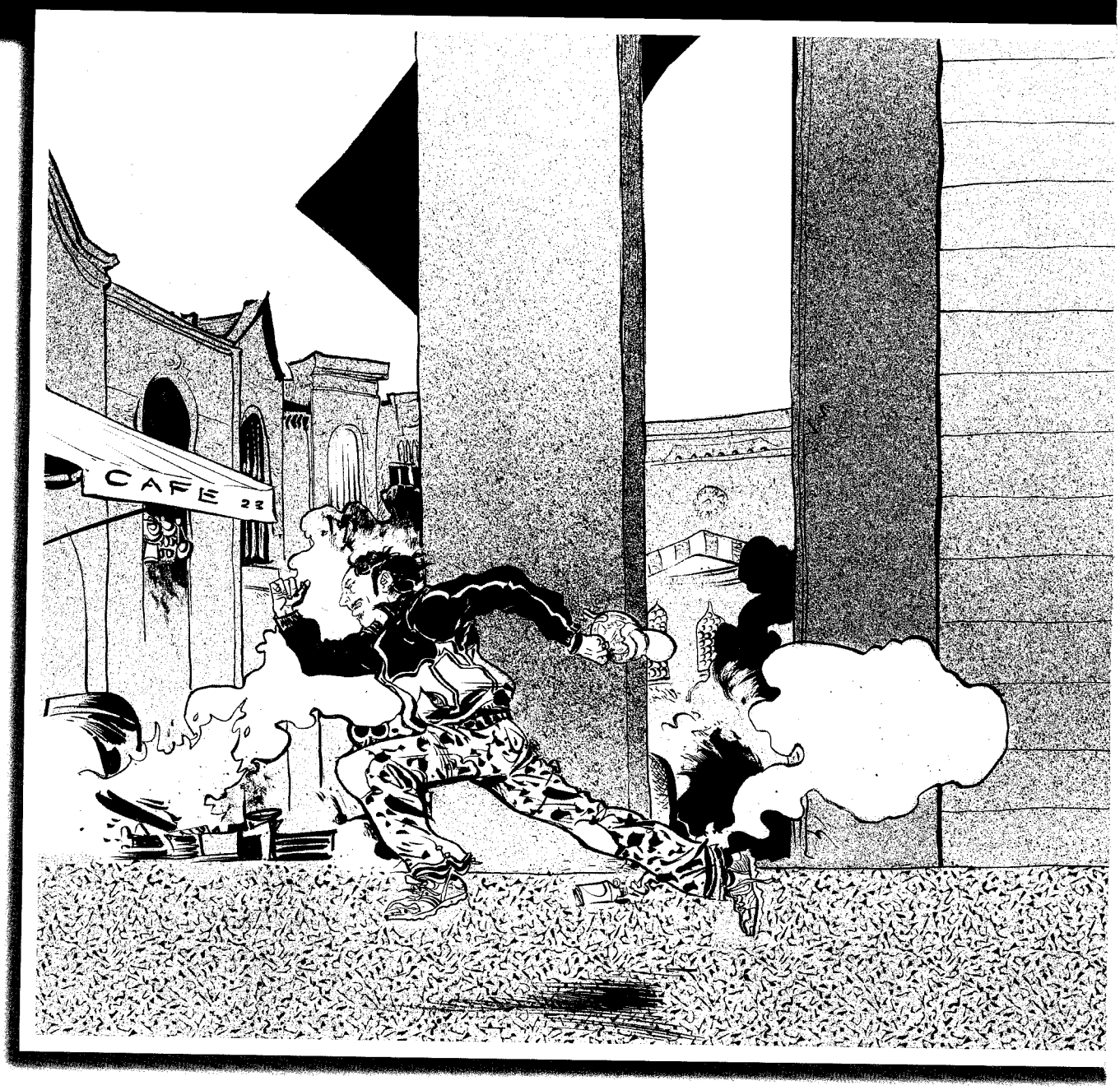

North of the Golden Horn, on the European side of the city, it is almost impossible to walk down the crowded streets without passing a film crew. Turkish filmmakers are wan and drawn, earnest, deeply preoccupied with Turkey's rapid social transformation. Film departments at universities throughout the city are packed. The Turkish film sector expanded by 10 percent last year. Not all the movies are good, but they are unified by the experimental drive characteristic of a Weimar City.

Esen Kunt, a research assistant at the Plato Film School, tells me that she wants to make documentary films about Islam, religion, gender, and the transformation of intimacy in Turkey. She puts a book by Turkish sociologist Nilüfer Göle on the table, explaining that Göle's work has profoundly influenced her.

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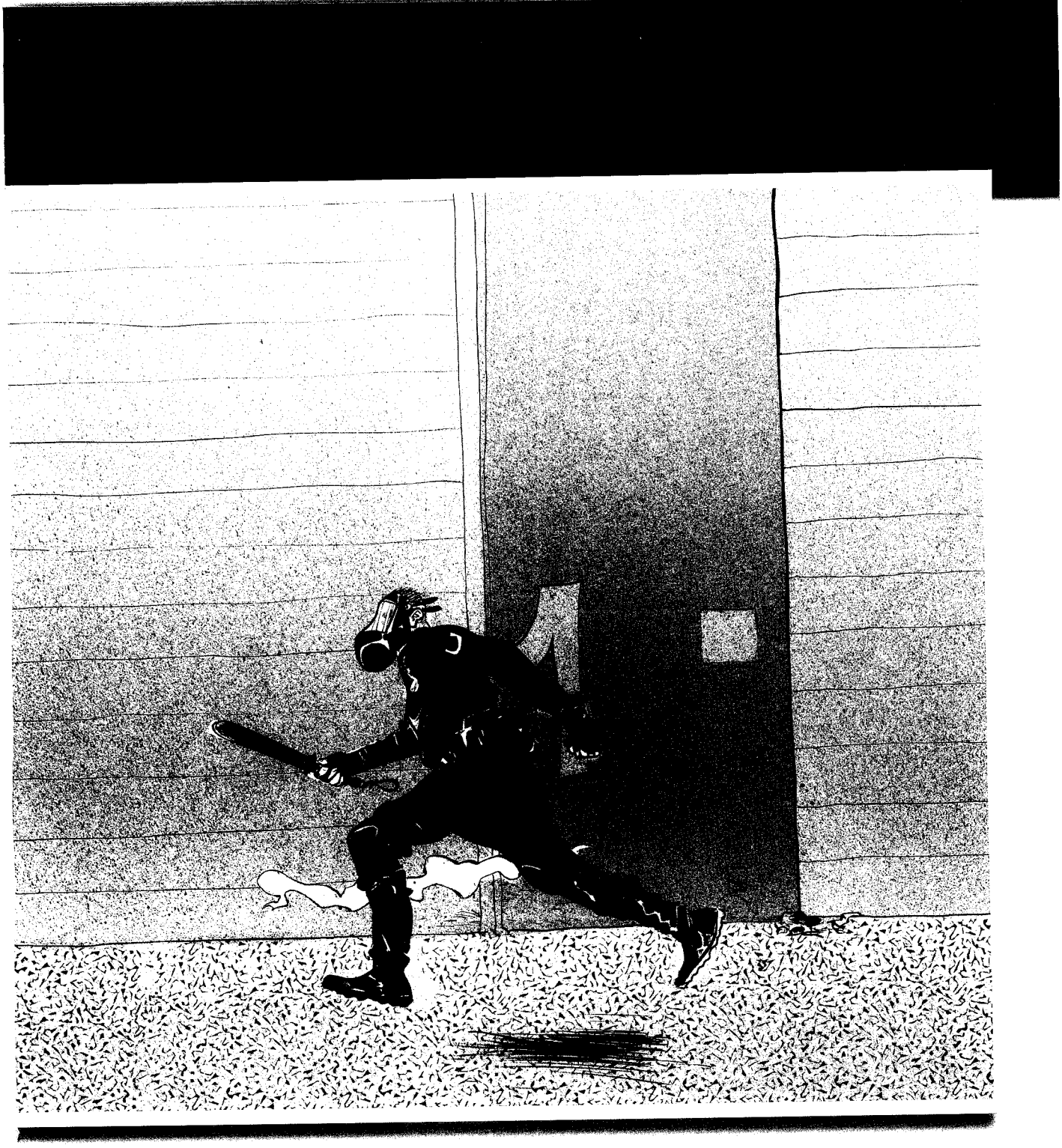

"If we try to analyze the current approaches in Turkish cinema, we can see that cinema is the *camera obscura* of Turkish political and cultural transformation, through the lens of gender identity and hegemonic masculinity. Turkish cinema symbolizes cultural memory and cultural resistance history. Especially in the last decade, Turkish directors have tried to criticize the struggle between modernization and convention, customs, gender identity, the hegemonic masculinity of the ideology. Art, especially cinema, gives you a huge opportunity to understand the cultural dichotomies and hybrid narratives of Turkish cultural history." Kunt's remarks—yes, that's really her name, and yes, she really said that—go some way toward explaining why Turkish films have yet to become box-office successes overseas.

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Other products of the film renaissance would have made Nazi propagandists proud. *Valley of the Wolves: Iraq*, a smash hit in 2006, was aptly described by the *Wall Street Journal* as a cross between *American Psycho* and *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*; it features, among other obscenities, a Jewish doctor who harvests human organs from Iraqi prisoners of war to sell to Israelis. Turkey's vice prime minister, Bülent Arınç, described the movie as "absolutely magnificent." The filmmakers are now making a sequel called *Valley of the Wolves: Palestine*.

If it cannot be said that Istanbul's artistic culture achieves the level of brilliance displayed in Weimar Berlin, there is brilliance here nonetheless, of the tortured kind that one finds especially in Weimar Cities. İnci Eviner's 2009 masterwork, *Harem*, is a video installation based on nineteenth-century engravings by Antoine Ignace Melling. In Eviner's mind, the harem is clearly no Occidental fantasy of sensual delight. The women are engaged in pointless, ritualized activities—some laboring to no obvious end; some involved in vague but obviously twisted and ungratifying sexual acts. In the allusion to the original German engravings, one senses Eviner's reproach: *You Europeans might think a harem is colorful and oh-so-Oriental, but let me tell you, it's not so exotic when you're forced back into it.*

The paintings of Taner Ceylan have recently sold for stratospheric prices at auction. I opened the website of his online gallery in front of my cleaning lady, a sweet, traditional Turkish woman from a small town in Middle of Nowhere, Anatolia. To see her face when the photos loaded was to understand the tensions of modern Istanbul. I assume that her native village is not one where much tribute is given to "astonishing technical masterpieces of hyper-realism" that pay homage to "the artistic avant-garde and the leather S&M circuit" while simultaneously "calling upon the pastoral tradition of man depicted in the context of nature's majesty to underscore the aesthetic idealization of two men in the throes of lovemaking."

And daily life? The Assk Café on the shores of the Bosporus features a Northern California–Mediterranean fusion menu; the name of the café means "love," or more properly, "looovvve," and it is the creation of Petek Mermillon, a typical Turkish utopian who went to California to study film but ended up studying Whole Foods. Love is not much in the air, however, when you leave the café. In recent news from the daily Turkish blotter, police are searching for protesters who booed the prime minister following the World Basketball Championship finale in Istanbul. The malefactors have apparently been identified in security footage from the arena.

No, not that much love in the air. The PKK, an ultranationalist Kurdish organization, spent the summer setting off bombs. Enraged Turkish nationalists went on a counter-rampage, destroying shops and buildings, clashing with security forces, burning official vehicles, and attacking police stations in the hope of finding Kurds to lynch. Who's stirring up this unrest? Depends on whom you ask. The AKP's backers say it's the hydra-headed so-called Deep State—Ergenekon's progenitors—which, they believe, is trying to provoke a civil war to get rid of the AKP. The AKP's opponents naturally blame the AKP, which, they claim, is trying to provoke a civil war to get rid of *them*. CIVIL WAR REHEARSAL, a local newspaper is calling it. But since 1984, the war against the PKK has claimed 40,000 lives: if this is the rehearsal, I'd hate to see the performance.

All very Weimar. All very Istanbul.

The historian Eric Hobsbawm recalled his return from the dying Weimar Republic thus: "'Imagine yourselves,' I told my fellow Old Philologians, 'as a newspaper correspondent based in Manhattan and transferred by your editor to Omaha, Nebraska. That's how I felt when I came to England after almost two years in the unbelievably exciting, sophisticated, intellectually and politically explosive Berlin of the Weimar Republic. The place was a terrible letdown.'"

I am often asked why I stay in Istanbul. Often, I ask myself. But in the end, isn't it obvious? After this, anyplace else would bore me senseless. What curious student of history could resist the chance to see something like this with her own eyes? Who wouldn't want to know what will happen next?

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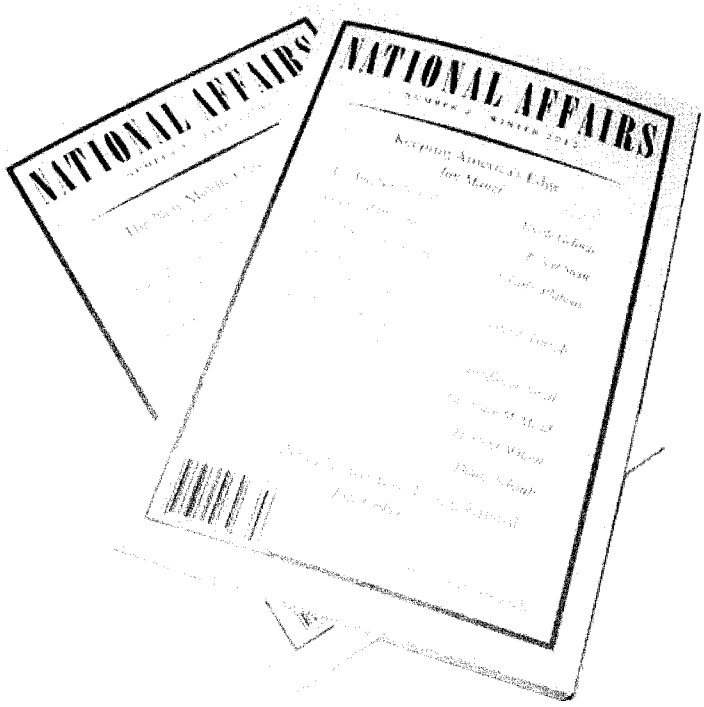
CLARITY AND INSIGHT ON AMERICA'S CHALLENGES

IN A WORLD OF FEVER-SWAMP POLITICS
AND ARID, OVERLY SPECIALIZED EXPERTISE,
NATIONAL AFFAIRS ARRIVES AT JUST
THE RIGHT TIME
—DAVID BROOKS



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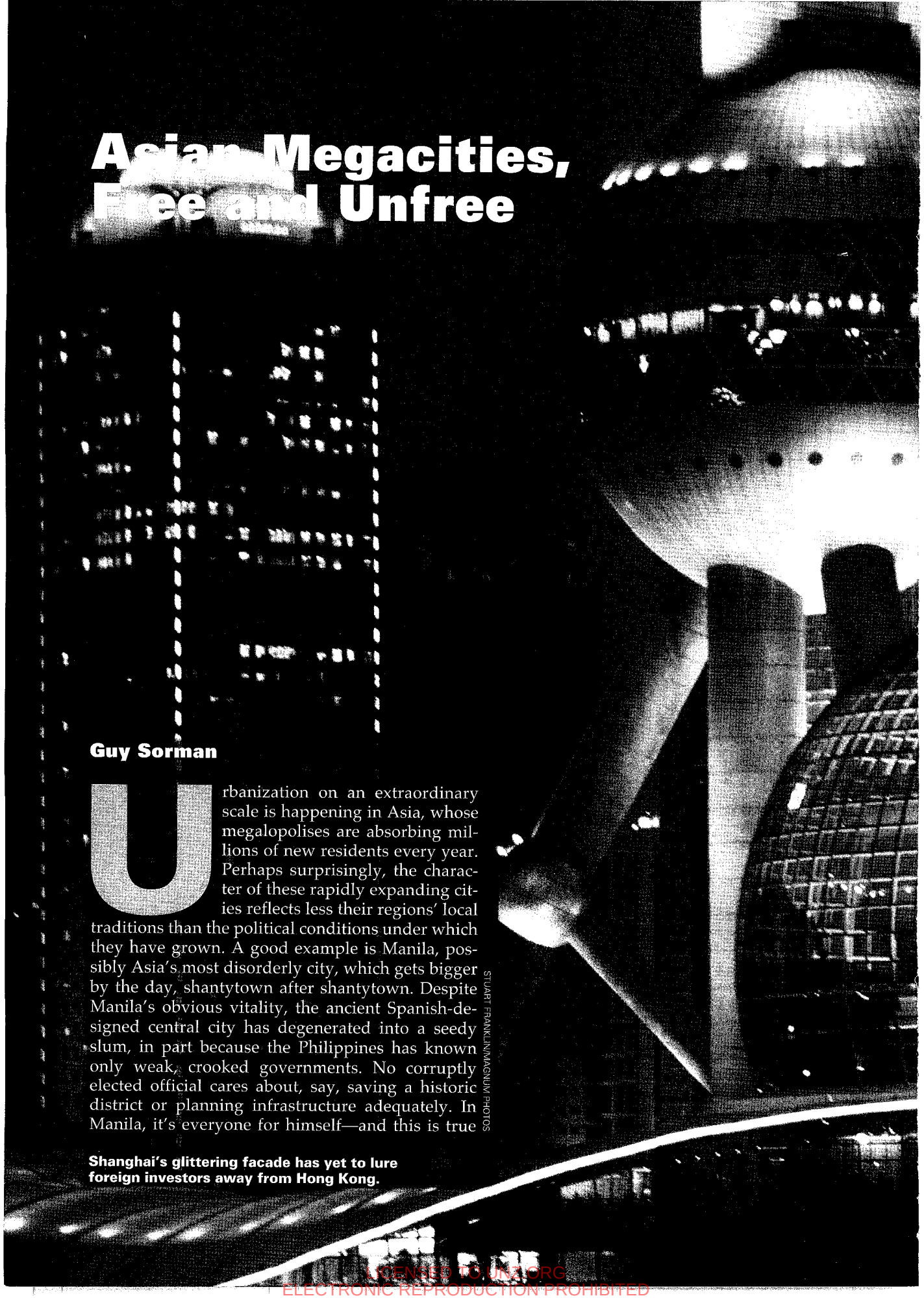
Asian Megacities, Free and Unfree



Guy Sorman

Urbanization on an extraordinary scale is happening in Asia, whose megalopolises are absorbing millions of new residents every year. Perhaps surprisingly, the character of these rapidly expanding cities reflects less their regions' local traditions than the political conditions under which they have grown. A good example is Manila, possibly Asia's most disorderly city, which gets bigger by the day, shantytown after shantytown. Despite Manila's obvious vitality, the ancient Spanish-designed central city has degenerated into a seedy slum, in part because the Philippines has known only weak, crooked governments. No corruptly elected official cares about, say, saving a historic district or planning infrastructure adequately. In Manila, it's everyone for himself—and this is true

STUART FRANKLIN/MAGNUM PHOTOS

Shanghai's glittering facade has yet to lure foreign investors away from Hong Kong.

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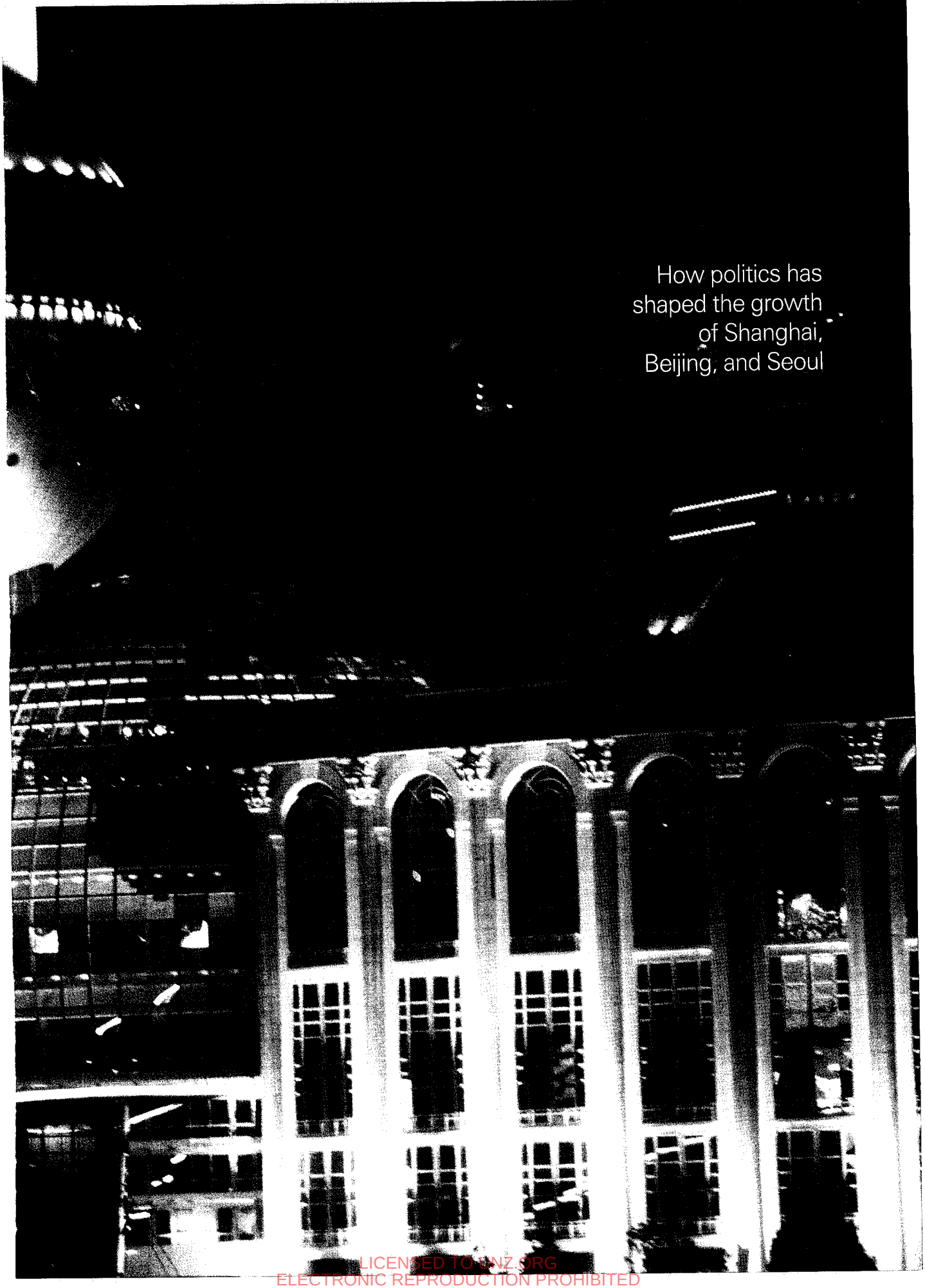

How politics has shaped the growth of Shanghai, Beijing, and Seoul

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not just of the politicians but also of the wealthy elite, who have decamped to a vast gated community, called Makati, located nearer to the international airport than to the older Manila.

However, one finds the most striking evidence of how politics shapes the new Asian megalopolises in the differences between Seoul, South Korea's capital, and China's leading cities. After all, the Korean and Chinese cultures are similar. Both are founded on the hierarchical Confucian philosophy; both have been influenced by Buddhism. But Seoul is democratic, and the political debates of an open society have profoundly influenced its development. China's cities, by contrast, reflect the autocratic and corrupt rule of the Communist Party.

Take Shanghai, China's largest city, with a population of more than 19 million. Originally built by Europeans for Europeans, Shanghai has preserved some of the streets of its West-in-the-East past and boasts a lively, nearly tropical ambience that endears it to foreign visitors. But the Chinese government has, unsurprisingly, sought to transform the city into a glittering showcase of China's rising power—above all, to lure foreign banks and investors away from Hong Kong. The tactic has yet to succeed: Hong Kong remains more attractive, though less because of its impressive buildings (Shanghai's can compete in height, if not in architectural quality) than because of its commitment to the rule of law.

Shanghai is a "costly facade to maintain," confesses Yan Hansheng, its deputy mayor for finance. The city's primary financial resources are still its traditional factories, owned mostly by the government, which continue to grind out steel, cars, and textiles. These industries, located west of the city center, remain hidden behind the costly facade; few foreigners ever travel that far. To protect Shanghai's gleaming appearance further, the government also keeps tight control over the population. Officials view the peasant migrants who work menial jobs in Shanghai as a stain on the Western-oriented city and prevent them from living there or sending their children to local schools. To live permanently in Shanghai, one must be born a Shanghai citizen. (The mother transmits citizenship—a system in effect throughout China.) There are some exceptions, based on merit—holding a university degree helps—or on securing a fake identity card. All other migrants who work in Shanghai, though, must return by night to the shantytowns or shoddy workers' dormitories at the city's periphery, far from the cosmopolitan city center.

The authoritarian Communist regime also shapes China's capital city, though in a different way. Travelers to Beijing should not expect to find any traces of the ancient and beautiful imperial capital, whose debasement began immediately after the Communist revolution. In October 1949, from Tiananmen, the monumental gate leading to the imperial palace, Mao Zedong proclaimed the "liberation" of China and demanded that factory chimneys replace pagodas and temples. About 1,000 religious buildings, many of them hundreds of years old, were soon destroyed or transformed into belching factories. By the early 1960s, Beijing looked more like mid-nineteenth-century Birmingham than like the capital that European travelers had once nicknamed the "Holy City." Unmoved by the pleas of some older scholars, Mao also demolished the walls surrounding Beijing, which had stood since the seventeenth century. The ostensible purpose was to ease traffic, but there were few cars in the city at the time.

In 1979, the Communist regime inaugurated a new era of reforms designed to bring China into the global economy. For Deng Xiaoping and his clique, Beijing's factories didn't look modern enough, so the regime closed them or relocated them to the city's outskirts. But the reformers also completed Mao's destruction of old Beijing. The old city was a maze of neighborhoods made up of one-story houses built around square inner courts and separated by narrow lanes, or *hutongs*. These traditional neighborhoods could have been saved or modernized, but the reformers razed them in the name of hygiene (the official motive) and real-estate speculation (the real motive), erecting huge office towers in their stead. The *hutong* dwellers were moved to shoddily built, city-owned shoeboxes on the city's edge, where rent is cheap but modern amenities like elevators and proper heating are often

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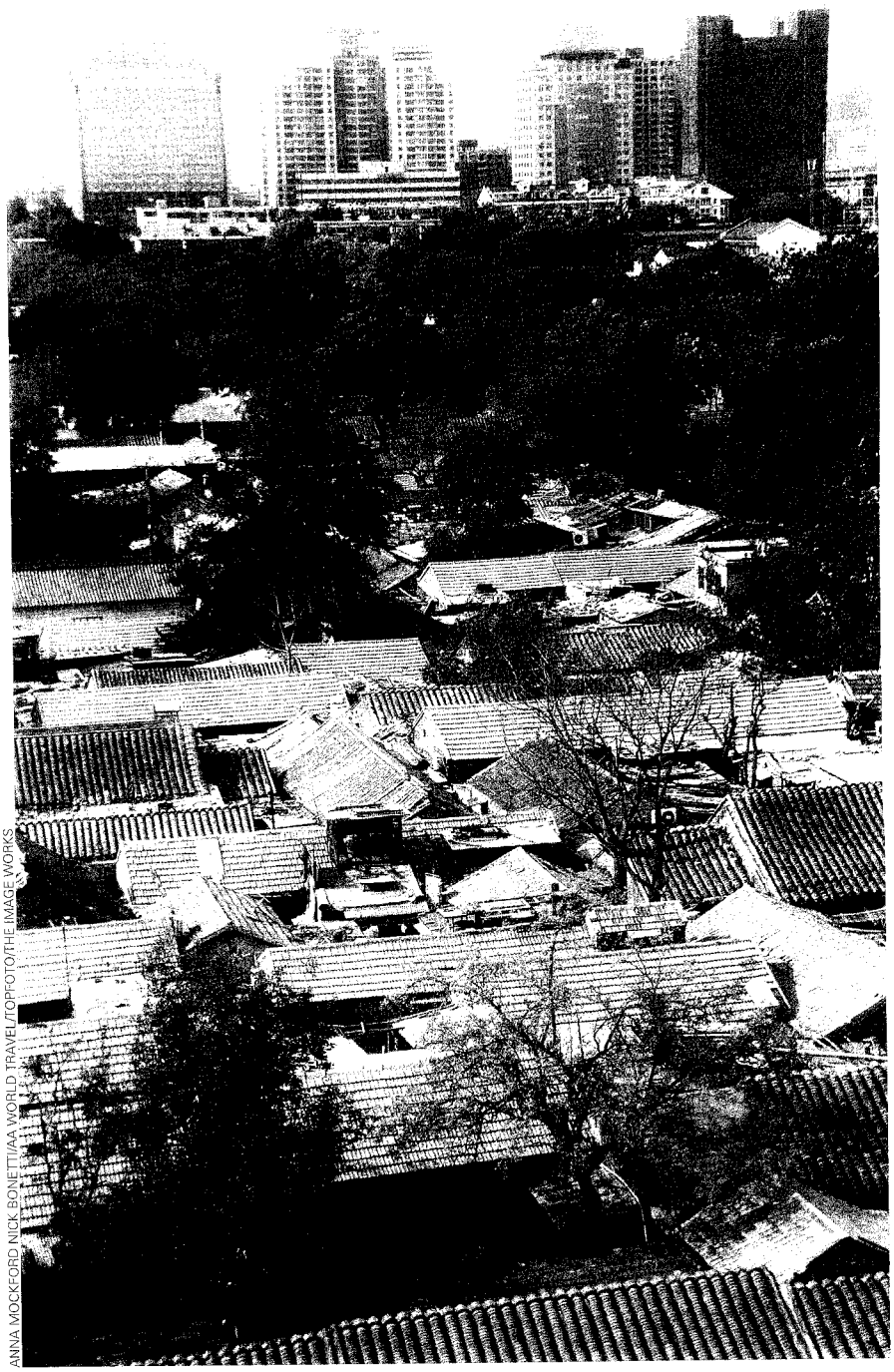
lacking. The government is now rebuilding a few of the original *hutongs*, characteristically seeking to please tourists in search of the authentic Beijing.

The office towers that give Beijing its contemporary sheen made the landowners—the Party and the military establishment—rich. But they also made the city ugly, since they were built hastily and with no concern for appearance. As a concession to history, some new buildings will incorporate a touch of the past—a traditionally tiered roof, say, or upturned eaves at the top of a high-rise—but these combinations tend to be incoherent. Here, too, a facade is in place. One-third of the office buildings remain empty because speculation outran the needs of the market.

Hoping to improve its undistinguished and often ugly cityscape before the 2008 Olympics, Beijing officials brought in some big-name architects from around the globe. The Netherlands' Rem Koolhaas designed a new office for China Central Television; the Swiss firm Herzog and de Meuron constructed an Olympic stadium (the Bird's Nest, as it is known colloquially); the Frenchman Paul Andreu produced an opera hall, the National Grand Theater. Yet the buildings, whatever one thinks of them aesthetically, could stand anywhere in the world and bear no relation to China's culture or traditions. (If the Chinese didn't want his egg-shaped opera hall, Andreu said, he would sell it to Canada.) Like the office towers, these expensive international trophies are absurdly underused. The Beijing opera currently has no program—the city is a cultural void—and the Olympic stadium has idled since the end of the games.



ANNA MOCKFORD NICK BONETTI/AA WORLD TRAVEL/TOPFOTO/THE IMAGE WORKS

Not much is left of old Beijing, thanks to the ruthless modernization of the Communist Party.

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Where Beijing's walls once stood, roads now encircle the city. One road was constructed, and then another as the population grew, and then more. Today, seven concentric highways loop the city of 10 million. Ask a Beijing resident where he lives, and you might hear: "Somewhere between the sixth and seventh circular road." "Beijing is more modern than Paris," the city's then-mayor told me some years back. "You have just one circular freeway. We have seven!" The roads are choked with nightmarish traffic (cars are no longer scarce in Beijing) under a hazily polluted sky.

Beijing is not a friendly city. There are few places to walk and almost no parks. It sometimes seems as if the city wants to fill its every void with concrete to the maximum possible height. Stand-alone shops are rare, since they take up too much space; malls have replaced most of them. As oppressive as the city feels, the police presence is not that visible. Chinese subjects know that any lawbreaker will face serious punishment, which makes the country's urban areas safe.

As in Shanghai, and with the same legal rationale, the authorities deny rural migrants access to Beijing's better neighborhoods. And this April, the Beijing government added another layer of control to prevent migrants from spending too much time in the city: "sealed management." In 16 villages in Beijing's southern suburbs, where most residents are migrants, iron gates slam shut at night and lock the population in, except for those with special permits for night labor. The local Communist Party authorities claim dubiously that "80 percent of the residents applaud this practice, which increases security." China's strong prejudices against the poor—reinforced by government discrimination—have also increased the popularity of American-style gated communities for the wealthy. These communities, never too far from the airport, usually have easy access to golf courses.

Beijing is a dead city after 8 PM, with the exception of a few streets reserved for the nightclubbing of the golden youth—the sons and daughters of the ruling elite. The young and wealthy make no effort to hide their money. One finds in Beijing's core a concentration of luxury shops, dedicated to fancy cars and high fashion, whose customers are mostly these twentysomething Chinese, dubbed "young princes" by the less affluent.

All that remains of old Beijing is the imperial palace, also known as the Forbidden City. During the late 1960s, when I had the privilege of visiting it, the Forbidden City dominated Beijing. Nowadays, tall office buildings surround it, so that it seems to be sinking into the new city. True, the Forbidden City wasn't in perfect condition 40 years ago, but the restoration work done on it since then has sometimes been sloppy—garish red concrete beams have replaced wooden ones, for example. American visitors may or may not be pleased to discover a Starbucks there.

Seoul, only two hours by plane from Beijing, was also an imperial city until Japan conquered it in 1910. Not much remains of the old Seoul, either, though what destroyed it was not revolution but the Korean War. The city changed hands three times between 1950 and 1953. The former king's palace and its extraordinary gardens survived, as did the city hall and the main railway station, built in the Japanese "imperial" style of the twenties. Little else escaped intact.

Old Seoul was located north of the Han River; the modern city has expanded to the southern side as well. Though the mountains that ring Seoul limit sprawl, they haven't prevented a huge population influx. Since the war ended, Koreans by the millions have flooded from the countryside into the city. The authoritarian South Korean governments of the sixties and seventies, free-market and growth-oriented, welcomed this vast group of peasants seeking work, as did the big private conglomerates—the *chaebols*—that have driven South Korea's economic expansion.

After three decades of spectacular economic growth—roughly 10 percent a year—under the rule of generals, South Koreans started looking for a better, freer life. In 1993, civil demonstrations forced the military out of power, and democracy swept the country at both the local and national levels. Today, Seoulites elect their mayor, city council members, and 25 district mayors. As in any real democracy, divided

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government is not unknown. Since the June 2010 election, a conservative, Oh Se Hoon, has held the Seoul mayoralty, while the Left dominates the city council.

Democratization has helped transform Seoul into a more livable city in an extraordinarily short time. Before democracy, the authorities pursued economic growth at virtually any cost: real estate operated with little constraint, the number of private cars swiftly exceeded street capacity, public transportation was shoddy, and public spaces were basically nonexistent. But Seoul's mayor during the 2000s, Lee Myung Bak—formerly the CEO of the Hyundai Construction Company—understood that Seoulites wanted a city center, plazas, gardens, and spaces to shop and stroll, and he led a dramatic reshaping of the city, preserving what was left of the past but making huge improvements in urban amenities. He won the nickname "Bulldozer" for good reason. Among the projects undertaken while he was mayor: the Han's banks, formerly devoted to parking garages and freeways, became accessible to pedestrians; an ancient stream, the Cheonggyecheon, which once flowed through Seoul until buried by a freeway, was restored, helping vivify the central city; and rapid-transit buses joined the city's transportation system. During his mayoralty, too, formerly abandoned industrial areas transformed into gentrified neighborhoods, Korean versions of New York's Meatpacking District. These popular changes helped propel Lee Myung Bak to the South Korean presidency in December 2007.

It sometimes seems as if Beijing wants to fill its every void with concrete to the maximum possible height.

early all younger Koreans want to move to this exciting city, looking for better jobs, better schools, and more fun. Recently built high-speed trains connecting the provinces to the capital have accelerated the urbanization: young couples can move to Seoul but still visit their parents in the provinces on weekends, and thus avoid the sadness of leaving their families completely behind. According to Mayor Oh, if you include the population of neighboring cities like Incheon, which holds the international airport, the Seoul area is home to 25 million people, half of South Korea's total population. He expects "10 million or more" to join the urban influx over the next decade. This isn't China: South Koreans live where they want, freely renting and buying.

With so many young people, Seoul's nightlife throbs: cafés, theaters, and cultural centers crowd every city district. The central city is particularly popular, with its narrow streets, low houses, and maze of restaurants and art galleries. Fashionistas are everywhere. Korean women, less flashy than the wealthy Chinese, lean toward classic Parisian-style fashion or contemporary interpretations of ethnic Korean dresses and fabric.

Seoul is unusual among Asian cities for the diversity of its cultural life, from pop confections exported across Asia (sitcoms and rock bands boast millions of Chinese and Japanese fans) to sophisticated contemporary art. Seoul artists, directors, and designers are noted for their ability to link traditional Korean culture with avant-garde techniques. (The well-known video artist Nam June Paik, for example, made Buddhist-mandala-like sculptures out of discarded Samsung television sets.) In Seoul, as in New York and Berlin, one feels the pulse of a democratic society. There is a bit of national pride as well, directed at Japan, Korea's former colonizer, and at China, the giant next door.

All this cultural ferment, of course, takes place in the shadow of totalitarian North Korea, only 30 miles from downtown Seoul. Yet North Korea does not haunt Seoulites' way of life. I remember a different mind-set a few decades ago, pre-democracy. North Korea looked more threatening at the time; many rebellious Seoul students would have supported it against the South Korean military leadership; plenty of

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Seoulites still had family connections up north. Today, only a few leftist Seoul intellectuals wax nostalgic about Pyongyang. For most South Koreans, North Korea is neither dreamland nor nightmare. It has vanished from their concerns, seemingly as far away as the moon; it is a place you watch on television, not a neighbor you fear or a distant cousin.

Foreign tourists still visit the border, famously known as the demilitarized zone, or DMZ; at the village of Panmunjom, they watch the North Korean military marching near the armistice line, only yards away from American soldiers on the other side. Seoulites seldom drive to the DMZ, though, and when they do, it will often be for picnicking, since the area has become, by historical accident, a bird haven. Seoul's anxieties about North Korea, to the extent any remain, have also been eased by the creation of a free-trade zone in the North Korean city of Kaesong, where South Korean factories employ North Korean workers. Even North Korea's sinking of a South Korean ship in April 2010 did not have an effect on Kaesong's business.

Should the North Korean regime collapse, Seoulites don't expect anything like the wave of refugees that surged into the West after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Though they hesitate to say it, most would prefer North Koreans to stay up north in such a case, at least until the countries' economies are more in sync. They imagine something akin to China's annexation of Hong Kong, a city that retains its institutions behind a sealed border.

With Seoul's population burgeoning and the city limits restrained by geography, where to put everyone? Mayor Oh's partial solution: skyscrapers. Tall buildings are everywhere these days—the tallest of all being the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, rising to a dizzying 2,717 feet. But what Oh envisions for Seoul is nevertheless unprecedented: several huge towers that would effectively be vertical towns. Three of these tower projects are currently planned for Seoul, with one, "Seoul Lite," already under construction. Seoul Lite will be 2,000 feet tall, with 133 floors; it will hold condos, a luxury hotel, office space, malls, concert halls, schools, health-care facilities, and other services, all in one building. About 20,000 people are expected to live permanently in the tower, with as many as 50,000 occupying it during the workday. Are Seoulites ready to live on the hundredth floor of a tower? It seems so: these towers aren't the mayor's utopian dream but private business ventures, driven and managed by *chaebols*. Seoul Lite is a Daewoo project; another tower, south of the Han, has been proposed by the Lotte real-estate firm; and Samsung wants to build a cluster of tall buildings, with Daniel Libeskind as lead architect.

Seoul Lite's sponsors claim that its condos are selling briskly and at higher prices than anywhere else in the city. It may help, the mayor says, that the building will be "an iconic construction, the first tower one will see when driving from the airport to the central city." Seoul Lite will be trendily ecological, too, since its hollow center will encourage air circulation, reducing energy costs. (Though Seoul isn't suffering from bad pollution these days, South Koreans are enthusiastic about green development, seeing it as a promising business venture.) Seoul Lite could also ease traffic congestion in the city: "Its residents will tend not to move around so much, since so many services will be available right where they live," Oh tells me. The city plans to build elevated "sky trains" to connect the towers with one another, with the downtown area, and with the Incheon airport.

Will the towers and sky trains actually materialize? The Korean opposition on the left generally isn't enamored with any *chaebol* enterprise. But this isn't North Korea, which means, as Oh observes, that "eventually, the market will decide." If Seoul does opt for the skyscrapers, he believes, the city could become a model for the booming megalopolises of the developing world. And the firms behind Seoul's proposed towers would like to replicate their dream globally. A vision of São Paulo's or Jakarta's citizens driving Hyundais, watching news broadcasts at traffic lights on Samsung smartphones, and on their way home to Korean-built sky towers is typically Korean in 2010. And it is the ambition of free citizens. ■

IAN BERRY/MAGNUM PHOTOS

Seoul's democratically elected mayor restored the Cheonggyecheon River, once buried by a freeway.

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Now City

Tel Aviv, a modern, capitalist-built oasis in the Middle East

Sol Stern

On April 11, 1909, a group of 66 Jews gathered on some barren sand dunes north of the ancient port city of Jaffa for one of history's most improbable real-estate lotteries. A watchmaker from Lodz, Akiva Weiss, passed around a tin can filled with numbered seashells designating plots on which the participants were expected to build houses. Many were immigrants from Eastern Europe who lived in Jaffa's crowded, fetid Arab neighborhoods. They were lured to the lottery not only by the promise of garden cottages and sea breezes but also by the dream of national renewal—though the project's strictly Zionist aspect had to be played down. After all, the land on which the Jews hoped to build was part of the Ottoman Empire. It would have been imprudent to incur the displeasure of the Turkish sultan, claimant for the Muslim caliphate and defender of Islam.

The prospectus for the housing development did, however, hint at its historic purpose. It declared that the new neighborhood by the Mediterranean Sea would eventually develop into the "first Hebrew city"—where, by hard work and enterprise, Jews could disprove the anti-Semitic stereotypes that depicted them as urban parasites. This was a controversial undertaking even among Jews living in Palestine. Many worried that the development would become just another vulnerable Jewish ghetto. According to a contemporary account, a Yiddish-speaking kibitzer stood by on the lottery morning, shouting out to his fellow Jews that they were "building on shifting sands." The prospects became even unlikelier after World War I broke out and the Ottoman authorities evacuated the Jewish residents from the coastal area.

Yet less than 40 years later, David Ben-Gurion read out Israel's declaration of independence at the Tel Aviv Museum on majestic, tree-lined Rothschild Boulevard, not far from the spot on the beach where the lottery drawing had taken place. Israel's founding father could take the gamble of proclaiming independence in part because the first Hebrew city—its population expanded to more than 250,000—had become the economic and political bulwark of the nascent Jewish state. Tel Aviv would then serve as the military command center and arsenal for Israel's yearlong war against five invading Arab armies.

Last year, the first Hebrew city celebrated its centenary. Celebrities and dignitaries from around the globe joined the festivities, often expressing admiration at Tel Aviv's emergence as a dynamic world city. The foreign commentators noted Tel Aviv's reputation as the "nonstop city" and recalled its designation by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site for its abundant Bauhaus architecture. Contrary to the skeptics, the neighborhood in the dunes did not become a ghetto: Tel Aviv is now the most affluent, tolerant, and culture-soaked city in the Middle East.

A recent testimonial to Tel Aviv's success, albeit a perverse one, came from *Time*. On the eve of September's renewed Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, the magazine answered the question suggested on its cover—WHY ISRAEL DOESN'T CARE ABOUT PEACE—by citing the country's booming economy, which had supposedly made its citizens complacent. The prime evidence of that economic energy? Tel Aviv. Five of the six

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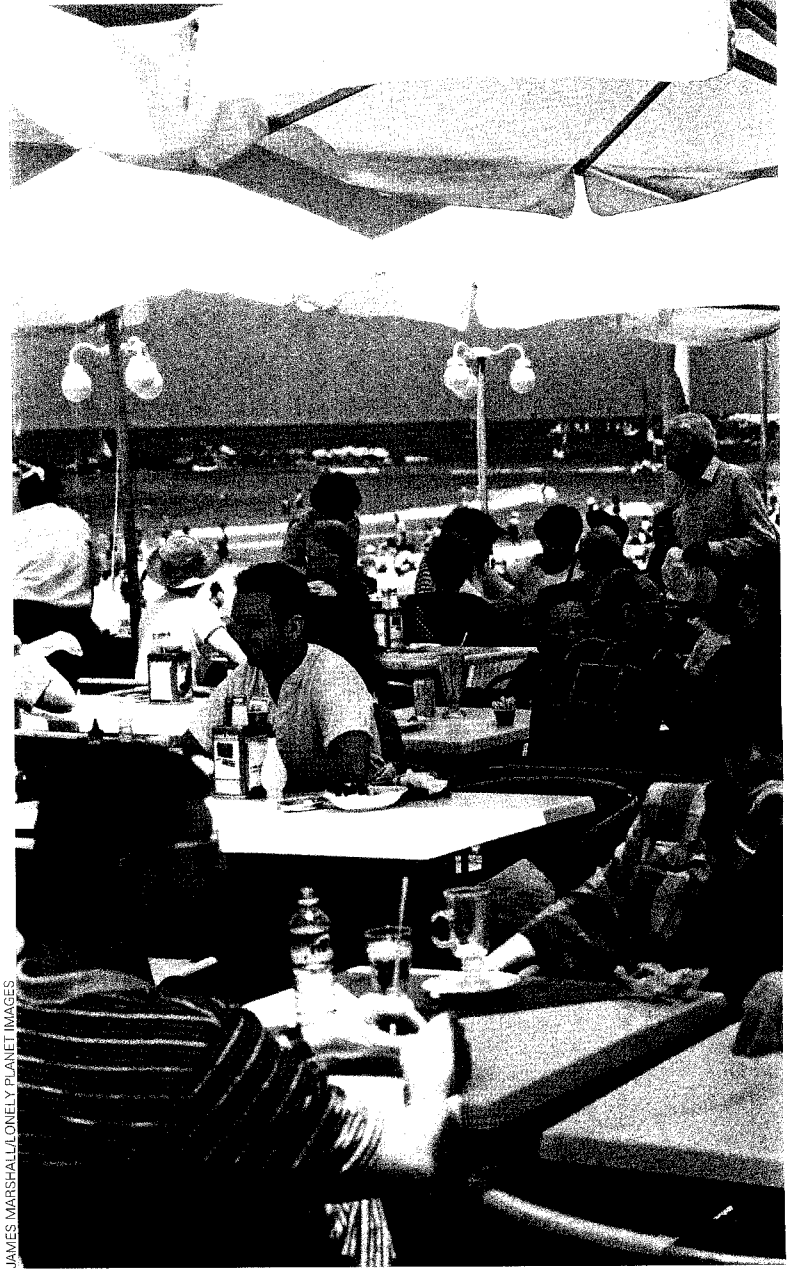
photographs accompanying the article depicted young Israelis enjoying the good life in the nonstop city by the sea.



JAMES MARSHALL/LONELY PLANET IMAGES

Tel Avivans enjoy the good life in one of the city's many cafés.

rom an idea in the sand dunes to an economic and cultural dynamo a century later, Tel Aviv is the most impressive testament to the Zionist movement's practical accomplishments. Yet the city also represents something of a resolution to one of Zionism's most consequential philosophical schisms.

Many early Zionist thinkers, strongly influenced by the utopian writings of Tolstoy and the European socialists, placed their hopes for Jewish national revival on the ideas of collectivism and of working the land. The influential writer A. D. Gordon, for example, abhorred cities and commerce, believing that urban life forced Jews into parasitic, nonproductive occupations. The best response to European anti-Semitism was thus for Jews to return to Israel and remake themselves, physically and spiritually, in communal agricultural settlements called kibbutzim.

The kibbutzim also offered the strategic advantage of expanding the area of Jewish settlement in Palestine. As frontier garrison communities, they provided defense against the Arab armies that attacked the new state at its birth in 1948. By then, the 200-plus kibbutzim represented just 7 percent of Israel's Jewish population, but they had an outsize influence on how the world perceived the case for a Jewish state. In the words of philosopher Martin Buber, the kibbutz was the world's only "socialist experiment that did not fail." Buber's judgment proved wrong; the kibbutzim are now undergoing a profound economic and social crisis. But at the time, the possibility of a truly successful socialism in Israel helped win crucial international political support—particularly from the Left—for the Zionist cause.

Tel Aviv's founders championed a very different path to Zionist fulfillment: commerce, entrepreneurial capitalism, and bourgeois values. The land on which the first Tel Aviv homes went up was purchased from Arabs by the Jewish National Fund, but this wasn't a collective, organized-from-above enterprise. Individuals bought property, started businesses, won and lost. A severe financial crisis in the mid-1920s caused many residents to leave the area. Then a new wave of Jewish immigrants, with money to invest, arrived from Poland. Later, as Hitler took power, thousands of German Jews with capital and talent departed for Tel Aviv, perhaps reluctantly at first. There they founded banks and industrial and engineering firms and created the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange.

Some of these new arrivals literally built the city. In 1933, the Nazis shuttered the world-famous Bauhaus art school. Several Jewish architects associated with the modernist movement

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immigrated to Tel Aviv and pioneered a wave of Bauhaus construction in the city. Today, more than 3,000 Bauhaus buildings still stand there, more than in any other city in the world.

Another refugee from Hitler was Berlin department-store magnate Salman Schocken. He purchased the daily newspaper *Haaretz* for his son Gershom and created a successful book-publishing company—private enterprises that became part of the city's cultural fabric. Salman's grandson, Amos Schocken, is now *Haaretz*'s publisher and, apart from his paper's leftist slant on political issues, supports the free market. "The welfare of people grows because of private initiative, not a managed economy," he declared recently.

In 1923, Meir Dizengoff, an original backer of the lottery on the dunes, became the city's first mayor. He was a towering, autocratic figure who daily toured his expanding city on horseback. Dizengoff stood up for the business community, even as the official Zionist line proclaimed the moral superiority of the kibbutzim and the "workers' movement." Against socialist accusations that the blatant commercialism of Tel Aviv reflected the corrupted values that Jews had learned during their exile, Dizengoff unapologetically promoted entrepreneurship and private capital. To believe that commerce warped the Jewish character, he argued, was to accept anti-Semitic premises. "Tel Aviv was founded by the initiative of private citizens," he wrote. "The victory of Tel Aviv is the victory of the middle class."

In the first Hebrew city, no contradiction existed between the realms of commerce and of high culture. In the 1920s and 1930s, Tel Aviv was a magnet for European writers, painters, and musicians. Tel Avivans fell in love with their Hebrew poets, and children recited their poems and songs in the city's schools. Israel's poet laureate, Hayyim Nahman Bialik, arrived from Odessa in 1924. His imposing two-story house overlooking the beach became a mecca for the city's leading artists and writers, who met to discuss culture and the political issues of the day. Their arguments also played out in the pages of the city's array of newspapers and literary journals. By the late 1930s, Tel Aviv's 150,000 residents could choose from six daily newspapers (three privately owned and three affiliated with the leading political parties), plus several cultural weeklies.

Tel Aviv is an "asynchronic city," says the Israeli geographer Maoz Azaryahu. "It has no history and no future. It's the now city." The implication is that Tel Aviv—unlike Jerusalem, for example—isn't trapped by its past and constantly reinvents itself, as its citizens also constantly remake their lives. Azaryahu's idea helps account for the adventurous life of my wife's grandfather, Yitzhak Katz. As a young child, he fled with his parents from the Russian pogroms of 1905, first settling in Cairo and then, at 19, in Tel Aviv. Lacking higher education or a profession, he found a productive niche in a community that created civic institutions as fast as it added new streets. He invented a position for himself as Belgium's vice consul in Tel Aviv and then founded the city's first chamber of commerce. Katz then appointed himself promoter of the city's modernist painters—including such future luminaries as Reuven Rubin, Yosef Zaritsky, and Tsiona Tagger—and launched venues for their work. In 1983, ten years before his death, he received the Tel Aviv Prize for his role in the city's cultural efflorescence.

Tel Aviv wasn't shaped by commerce and polite discourse alone; the city arrived through fire and blood. There was hardly a time when Yitzhak Katz and his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren didn't find themselves threatened by violence and war. In 1921, Jaffa's Arabs rioted against further Jewish immigration and murdered dozens of Jewish residents, causing hundreds to flee to Tel Aviv. In the late twenties and thirties, Tel Aviv's Jews were themselves the targets of violent outbreaks by the Jaffa Arabs.

Because their city faced the Mediterranean, Tel Avivans also became painfully aware of the last-ditch, mostly futile, efforts by European Jews (in many cases, their relatives) to escape the Nazi murder machine. To appease the Arabs, Britain had cut off Jewish immigration to Palestine at a time when the Jews had no other means of escape. Leaky ships full of desperate Jews tried to run the British naval blockade. (Arthur Koestler called

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them "the little death ships.") Most were intercepted near the coast and sent back to the inferno.

In November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted to partition Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states. Almost immediately, units of the Arab Liberation Army slipped into Jaffa and launched deadly assaults against neighboring Tel Aviv. During the ensuing War of Independence, Egyptian warplanes bombed Tel Aviv, and the Egyptian army advanced to a point just 20 miles south of the city.

Tel Aviv was also the main arena for the sometimes deadly rivalry between Haganah and Irgun, the military wings of the two main Zionist factions—the socialists under Ben-Gurion and the Revisionist Zionists led by Vladimir Jabotinsky. Leading up to independence, the two groups sometimes cooperated in underground military actions, launched from Tel Aviv safe houses, against the British occupation forces. At other times, the Irgun "broke discipline" and took actions against the British on its own. In response, Haganah rounded up Irgun fighters and turned them over to the authorities.

In the first Hebrew city, no contradiction existed between the realms of commerce and of high culture.

The final, tragic chapter in this conflict occurred on June 16, 1948, a few hundred yards off the Tel Aviv beach. A ship was bringing in a huge arms cache for Irgun units not yet integrated into the new state's army. Irgun's commander, Menachem Begin, refused Ben-Gurion's order to turn the arms over immediately to the army's central command. With hundreds watching from the beachfront, Haganah gunners, commanded by Yitzhak Rabin, fired on the ship, killing 15 seamen and Irgun fighters. Passions grew so inflamed that the two military forces verged on war. Begin averted a national disaster by ordering Irgun units to stand down and recognize the authority of Israel's new army under Ben-Gurion's command.

Even after Israel won the war, Tel Aviv was not safe. Over the past two decades, Palestinian suicide bombers have periodically penetrated the city, murdering hundreds of innocents on public buses and in restaurants and discos.

t was inevitable that the first Hebrew city and the ancient city of Jerusalem would compete for cultural and political preeminence—just as there have been national rivalries between Moscow and Leningrad, New York and Chicago, Madrid and Barcelona. In the first two decades after independence, however, there was no contest, for Jewish Jerusalem barely survived the 1948 war. First, Arab troops forcibly expelled all the Jewish residents from the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem's Old City. The Jordanian Arab Legion then cut off and encircled West Jerusalem, where most of the rest of the city's Jews lived. West Jerusalem was eventually saved by armored convoys from Tel Aviv that broke the siege. But for the next two decades, Jordan prevented Jews from visiting their historic holy places in the Old City. Meanwhile, Tel Aviv was welcoming hundreds of thousands of new immigrants. In 1950, Tel Aviv's municipal boundaries expanded southward to absorb Jaffa. (Henceforth the city's official name became Tel Aviv–Jaffa.)

For Israelis, the most emotionally satisfying outcome of the victory against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in the June 1967 war was the conquest and reunification of Jerusalem. There was hardly a dry eye in the land as Israelis heard a recording, played again and again on the Voice of Israel radio network, of soldiers from the elite paratroopers' brigade announcing that they had broken through the Jordanian lines and reached the Western Wall of the ancient Temple. The popular Israeli songwriter Naomi Shemer wrote "Jerusalem of Gold," its words evoking the return of the Jewish people to the "ancient city's walls." The song became a kind of alternative national anthem.

Israel's political and cultural center of gravity now shifted to Jerusalem. For 20 years, Israelis focused on the city's reunification, which opened

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access to all the holy sites. Jerusalem began to attract the majority of foreign tourism. Even secular Israelis delighted in exploring the Old City and, with the Palestinian West Bank temporarily peaceful, going down to Jericho and hiking in the Judaean hills.

Tel Aviv suddenly seemed passé. That's certainly how I felt when I worked in Israel as a foreign journalist in the early 1970s. I chose to live in Jerusalem because it was the politically serious place to be, but its beauty and historical sites were a bonus. Compared with the ancient city's seven hills, its new neighborhoods constructed out of glittering white Jerusalem stone, Tel Aviv looked worn out, even ugly. It was hard even to recognize the distinctiveness of the Bauhaus architecture because so many buildings, weathered by the salty sea air, had fallen into neglect.

The pendulum began to swing back in the early 1990s. Secular Israelis became uncomfortable with the growing political power of Jerusalem's hardline religious communities and complained that it was affecting their own quality of life. The ultraorthodox neighborhoods in Jerusalem erupted in violence whenever their residents believed that some secular encroachment had violated their community's autonomy—even though the law had never sanctioned those claims of autonomy. At the same time, Tel Aviv's city fathers, aware of the invidious comparisons with Jerusalem, launched programs for improving the city's infrastructure, making the beaches more accessible to residents and tourists, as well as fixing up the crumbling Bauhaus buildings so that one could again appreciate the smooth, unornamented white facades with their eye-catching rounded corners and balconies. Tolerant, fun-loving Tel Aviv no longer looked so unattractive to young Israelis.

Tel Aviv's second cultural explosion, like its first, was largely made possible by the success of the city's entrepreneurial and commercial class. Over the last two decades, the Tel Aviv metropolitan area has become Israel's center of high-tech start-ups. Indeed, Tel Aviv has become one of the most technologically influential cities in the world, and its high-tech sector is "an engine of global technology progress," in the words of tech guru George Gilder (see "Silicon Israel," Summer 2009).

The city's economic revolution has helped make many Israelis rich. Israel's GDP reached $200 billion in 2008, with an impressive per-capita income of around $28,000. People are even richer in Tel Aviv, where they spend their money on high culture and entertainment. For its 400,000 residents, the city now offers more than a dozen symphony orchestras and chamber ensembles, lots of theater groups and dance companies, countless art galleries, museums, and bookstores, and a fabled nonstop nightlife. And Tel Aviv still loves its poets: the greatest Hebrew verses of the century, from Bialik's to Yehuda Amichai's, have been engraved on the glass facades of public bus shelters. Despite its high real-estate prices, Tel Aviv has again become the place where ambitious and talented young Israelis want to live.

Tel Aviv is the Middle East's most socially liberal city by far; in some respects, it is even more socially tolerant than Michael Bloomberg's New York—the self-appointed beacon of urban toleration. *Out* magazine, for instance, calls Tel Aviv "the gay capital of the Middle East" (there's not much competition, true). As long as civic peace is maintained, few Tel Avivans think that another citizen's lifestyle is any of their business.

Liberal though the city is, Tel Aviv's youthful individualism thoroughly rejects the Bloomberg-style nanny state. The city's entrepreneurial café owners would go to the barricades if authorities forced them to post calorie counts, eliminate trans fats, or ban customers' dogs. That ingrained libertarianism shouldn't, however, be confused with anarchy: Tel Avivans are creative about preserving their liberties while accepting accommodations that are necessary to maintain civic peace. For example, in a city with many unapologetic smokers, the unwritten rule is that customers don't light up inside cafés, bars, and restaurants, but that all outdoor tables and facilities are open to individual choice. It doesn't require city bureaucrats to enforce the understanding.

Goodwill by all sides also characterizes Tel Aviv's approach to some of the touchy issues of religion in the Jewish state. Though the city's

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population is overwhelmingly secular, both the secular and the religiously observant accept that there will be no public transportation on the Sabbath and that all establishments will close on the holiest days of the year—Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Tisha b'Av. With these the only real prohibitions, Tel Aviv residents and businesses are free to follow their own consciences about all other aspects of public religious observance.

JACK GUEZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

One of Tel Aviv's more than 3,000 Bauhaus buildings, the most of any city in the world

t is deplorable, verging on calumny, that the pundits at *Time* take liberal Tel Aviv's affluence and joie de vivre as a sign of indifference to war and peace. Almost all of my Tel Aviv friends and relatives have been active in one or another of Israel's peace and human-rights groups. Every one of them has favored a two-state solution—independence for the Palestinians and an Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian territories. Yet as much as they supported (and still support) a generous settlement with the Palestinians, they are also—thankfully—sane. They don't allow themselves the dangerous luxury of disregarding the evidence. In 2000, their government, then headed by the Labor Party, offered the Palestinians a state; in return, Israel got the second intifada, including murderous suicide bombings in Tel Aviv. In 2005, a government led by Ariel Sharon pulled out of the Gaza Strip; in return, thousands of lethal rockets fell on Israeli cities a few miles south of Tel Aviv. Tel Avivans are acutely aware that they have chosen to live in one of the world's danger zones, targeted for destruction by a mad, Jew-hating regime about to go nuclear. In case they should ever forget, directions throughout the city point to the nearest air-raid shelter. Every family has also been issued a supply of gas masks.

Concluding reluctantly that the issue of war and peace is now in the hands of the Palestinians (and the Iranians, Syrians, and Hezbollah), Tel Avivans have decided to keep on living and building. *Time* may find that unaccountable. But it's simply what their courageous grandfathers and grandmothers have done, under similar conditions, for 100 years—ever since that fateful lottery on the "shifting sands."

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The Original Birth of Freedom

What we owe the audacious Athenians

André Glucksmann

Over the centuries, there have appeared two great conceptions of freedom. The first vision, which one can call "epic freedom," is freedom as Hegel or Marx understood it, the freedom of messianists and of revolutionaries. The meaning of freedom, on this view, is the progressive emancipation of man: step by step, battle by battle, mankind is supposed to break with its alienations and become the creator and absolute master of its fate. Epic freedom is the assumption of a cosmic mastery, more and more aware of itself. Crises become mere historical stages on the way to the final achievement of human emancipation.

The other position, very different, regards crises as intrinsic to freedom. This more modest conception can be called "tragic freedom." It is liberty understood in doubt and anxiety about the fate of man. Tragic freedom works in uncertainty, sailing toward no glorious destiny. Man is free, yes—free to learn from his mistakes. Or not. Socrates, who exemplifies this second view, ceaselessly puts freedom to the test; he questions it, explores it, experiments with it. His famous *daimon*, his interior voice or intimate conscience, is a negative spirit, one that offers only interdictions. Recall that the majority of the Socratic dialogues end in *aporia*, at an impasse; they do not lead anywhere. They must be perceived as exercises of free thought, not as stages on the way to a human epiphany.

So to write the history of the idea of freedom is to navigate between two shores, one tragic and critical, the other epic and euphoric. Each epoch cultivates its own relation to freedom. Each, moreover, imagines its own Greece, for it was ancient Athens that first enacted—in the public square, the *agora*—our relation to freedom, or rather our conflicting relations with freedom. Epic ages (the early Renaissance and the Enlightenment, for example) picture a Greece of original harmony. Times of chaos (such as sixteenth-century Europe, the twentieth century, and probably the dawn of the twenty-first) see Greece as the mother of all crises. This tragic vision—of freedom and of Athens—is surely the wiser of the two.

Socrates's relentless questioning challenged all claims to absolute knowledge.

FIRST-CENTURY AD FRESCO, EPHESUS/ERICH LESSING/ART RESOURCE, NY

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The Athenians demonstrated incredible audacity in affirming that human freedom must be understood without the gods, who are held not to be implicated in human affairs—no longer at the helm, so to speak. That affirmation is the source of philosophy, as we learn from Plato's *Apology*. Socrates was "the wisest of men," announced the Delphic oracle. Perplexed, Socrates neither affirmed nor denied this, but began an inquiry. He started to question all of Athenian society—rich and slave, learned and illiterate, wise and foolish. He questioned all claims to knowledge, whether religious, sophistic, traditional, or moral, including those concerning the ultimate ends of the community, which everyone claimed to know, even though they only approached such subjects superficially or arbitrarily. Socrates popped the mental bubbles that imprisoned those who claimed, with arrogant certainty, to possess absolute knowledge. He explored the Athenian *doxa*—common opinion—and brought to light those parts of it, poisoned by optimism, that concealed risks and thus put the city in danger. But true to his doubt before the oracle, he had no ready answers.

Socrates's uncertainty revealed a rupture that gave birth to philosophy. The divine word is a mystery; it can mean everything or nothing. Zeus neither speaks nor holds his tongue but makes a sign, as Heraclitus said. Man discovers that he himself is responsible for giving meaning to this sign. The word from above, or from elsewhere, must be deciphered. This is the Greek genius: the separation of heaven and earth.

Consider in this light the story of Croesus, the king of Lydia, famous for his extravagant wealth. The king asked the Delphic oracle to reveal the outcome of a war that he expected to start against the Persians. The oracle responded that he would bring down an empire. Sure of himself and of his luck, Croesus launched an attack—and his own empire fell. To counter the obscurity of oracles, Herodotus invented historical inquiry, just as Socrates pushed a similar logic to its limit and invented philosophical inquiry. A kindred mistrust was already at work at the heart of the *Iliad*, in which the gods seduce, cheat, lie, and hate. The jokes and tricks of the heavenly ones oblige mortals to count only on their freedom. "Virtue has no master," says Socrates in the *Republic*. "You will possess more or less of it as you honor or dishonor it."

This is not to say that the history of monotheistic religions is dogmatic or univocal when it comes to freedom, of course. For example, the Talmudists take a quasi-Socratic position with respect to the divine word, which they discuss, explore, and question ceaselessly. They open up the space of human freedom by observing that while the word of God is pure and perfect, men are impure and imperfect, and so their interpretation of that word will never be definitive. Indeed, human imperfection engenders freedom of interpretation in all three great monotheistic traditions, to various degrees.

With the Athenians, however—and this is an important difference—the gods are as imperfect as human beings, and the divine words are consequently doubtful and impure. In this sense, the Greek experience seems more radical than that of the monotheisms, since it presupposes no adherence to a unique word that would dominate the thought and freedom of men and women. For the Greeks, there was no way around the permanent crisis that constitutes the existence of a free human being.

But didn't this Athenian democracy, for all its freedom, condemn to death its most radical disturber, Socrates? To take the measure of this murder, at once physical and symbolic, it is important to understand how rare such events were. Athens was a tolerant city. Marginal people or rebels might be exiled, but they were seldom killed. To receive the death penalty, the father of philosophy had to anger a very powerful coalition of interests and opinions: Athenian conservatives, who reproached him for mocking gods and traditions; ambitious sophists, whose vanity and arrogance he denounced; and finally, the institutional democrats, who could not forgive the participation of a few of his former disciples in the dictatorship of the Thirty—the tyrants who ruled Athens briefly under Spartan protection at the end of the Peloponnesian War in 404 BC.

Socrates represented a reality that Athens, after the Peloponnesian debacle, did not want to see or remember. The return to democracy

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following the brief period of dictatorship was accompanied by an amnesty law, which quickly became an amnesia law. To bring up past quarrels was forbidden. Mentioning the disorder that had divided the city, or even the military defeat itself, became taboo. Thus Socrates's outspokenness, which made Athens famous, proved profoundly troubling to the war-sick Athenians themselves. But by making free speech a capital crime, Athens acted against its own past. The city, already worn out, eliminated itself, its own genius, along with Socrates.

The philosopher could have fled, but he was 70; he had no interest in leaving the city. He rejected his loyal friends' proposals for escape. He wanted to drink the hemlock. His name had been linked unshakably with the great Athenian intellectual revolution, and he would not allow it to be forgotten. And he succeeded: from his death sprang a new blossoming of philosophy. In a strange resurrection, a number of *logoi sokratikoi* emerged—improvisational theatrical performances in which eccentric characters, all calling themselves "Socrates," waited on street corners to question passersby about their convictions. With his death, Socrates sealed his destiny. His questioning resonates infinitely, to the dismay of those who hold power and claim absolute knowledge.

To discover freedom is to recognize a capacity for self-intoxication, and thus to condemn oneself to doubt.

Athens taught us that free will and critical thinking go together. The necessity of submitting celestial voices and their dictates to the painstaking criticisms of reason is a matter not of pride but of modesty: it is not because I think myself good or intelligent, but because I know I am fallible and capable of deceiving myself, that I am bound to investigate oracles, just as Socrates did with the Delphic message. The evil spirit—perhaps myself—"often disguises itself as an angel of light," Immanuel Kant later observed. To think is to defend one's freedom against one's imagination and to guard against a deceiving God, for "we were all children before becoming men," as Descartes said, and spent many years governed by our passions, not our reason.

To believe that it is enough to believe is a pathology that threatens every religion, even a secular and materialist one. To listen to voices without ever questioning them is superstition. To fail to examine the authenticity of one's commitments is arrogance. The combination of superstition and arrogance yields fanaticism: God is in me, and I am in God; there is no point in thinking, since my brain already occupies a little part of paradise. Free thought, by contrast, requires us to look reality, including unfortunate reality, in the eye. In response to the claims of a prayer that commands, implores, and requires, Aristotle proposes a cool attention that points out and observes. Non-pathological religions distinguish the temporal and the spiritual: king and priest in the Bible, caliph and preacher among the Muslims, the way of the world and the way of faith in the Christian tradition. "I believe in order to understand," say Augustine and Anselm, the first intellectuals of post-Roman civilization.

To discover one's freedom is to recognize a capacity for self-intoxication and self-deception, and thus to condemn oneself to doubt. This experience of freedom is primary for a current of modern philosophy, just as it was for the thinkers of antiquity. Descartes, in this sense Socrates's son, called it "a freedom, by which we can refrain from admitting to a place in our belief aught that is not manifestly certain and undoubted, and thus guard against ever being deceived."

One might object that this doubt, this constant questioning, is at odds with the dream of a harmonious world that some say characterized classical Greece. But that idea of harmony, of a golden age

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lost and ever sought, was by no means a particularly Greek one. Rather, it was an after-the-fact misinterpretation of Athenian philosophy—first Neoplatonic, then taking Byzantine, Shiite, and Florentine forms, eventually finding a place in the nineteenth-century university, and surviving until the present day.

By contrast, Thucydides and the Greek tragedians evoked an original chaos, a confusion and violence linked indissolubly with liberty. Aware of the universality of what was at stake in Athens, Thucydides presented his history as "a treasure for all times." He described the upheaval of war, both external and internal, that produced the Greek experience. Athens at the beginning, in his telling, was little more than a shabby bunch of bandits, pirates, runaways, outlaws—anything but the divinely chosen city celebrated in myths and rituals. Athenian freedom was born from drunken brawls and quarrels over shares of booty. No prophet opened the Red Sea for Athens, no god showed it the path to follow. Freedom gave rise from the beginning to disorder: how to think, survive, act, and resist in the jumble of human relations.

Thucydides witnessed the decline of Athens, so his sober vision is readily understandable. Yet his tragedian predecessors, who lived in the days of Greek splendor, showed a similar lucidity. Aeschylus and Sophocles depicted cities torn apart—Thebes, Argos—where the original chaos was unleashed again and again. In Argos, vendetta follows a mad course: King Agamemnon sacrifices his child, Iphigenia; he is assassinated by his wife, Clytemnestra, avenger of her daughter; and their son, Orestes, seeks justice by killing his mother. In Thebes—a peaceful city protected by insurmountable walls, founded by Cadmos, husband of the goddess Harmony—it is the very desire for absolute harmony that leads to disaster. This city of Oedipus dreams of exorcising all disputes, all chaos, in the regulation of a perfectly closed universe. Oedipus proceeds to kill his father and sleep with his mother.

Athens was a divided city that accepted its divisions, though not without difficulty. Though the harmonious interpretation of Greece derives, again, from Plato, the fact is that Plato spoke from a more down-to-earth standpoint: that of Thucydides's Athens, the city that fought and lost the Peloponnesian War and was still fresh with the blood of civil war. His dialogues supposedly take place before this defeat, but they were written and read afterward.

The example of the *Symposium* is enlightening. This text tells of a feast, organized to celebrate the triumph of the poet Agathon, in which the great minds of Athens participate in a philosophical and poetic competition on the theme of love. We seemingly encounter a contest of optimism, long interpreted as an ode to harmony—the text served as a manifesto of Neoplatonism. But Plato's contemporary readers knew, of course, that this apparent triumph was a retrospective illusion, an event that preceded a disaster of untold scale. For instance, Alcibiades, whose celestial beauty the guests of the symposium celebrate, brought about the downfall of Athens by promoting a catastrophic military expedition to Sicily and then defected twice—first to Sparta, then to Persia.

None of the Athenian lights gathered around Agathon in the name of love had any inkling of the tragic events that would soon follow, just as our best financial minds had no idea in June 2008 that their universe would crash that October. The equally elite guests of a *Symposium* written today might be billionaires rather than poets, gathering at Davos to give speeches about the health of the modern economy. But when we read such a work, we would hardly identify its author as an optimist or an idealist.

If Athens really was the birthplace of human freedom, how does one account for its acceptance of slavery? Many have reviled Aristotle for defending the institution, but at least he never described it as determined by the enslaved person's essence. The slave is potentially a free citizen because, like all human beings, he has the capacity to reason. He is a citizen who is not yet actual,

Even before Jesus did, Sophocles's *Antigone* described the boundary between Caesar's realm and God's.

FREDERIC LEIGHTON, "ANTIGONE"/CHRISTIE'S IMAGES/THE BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY INTERNATIONAL

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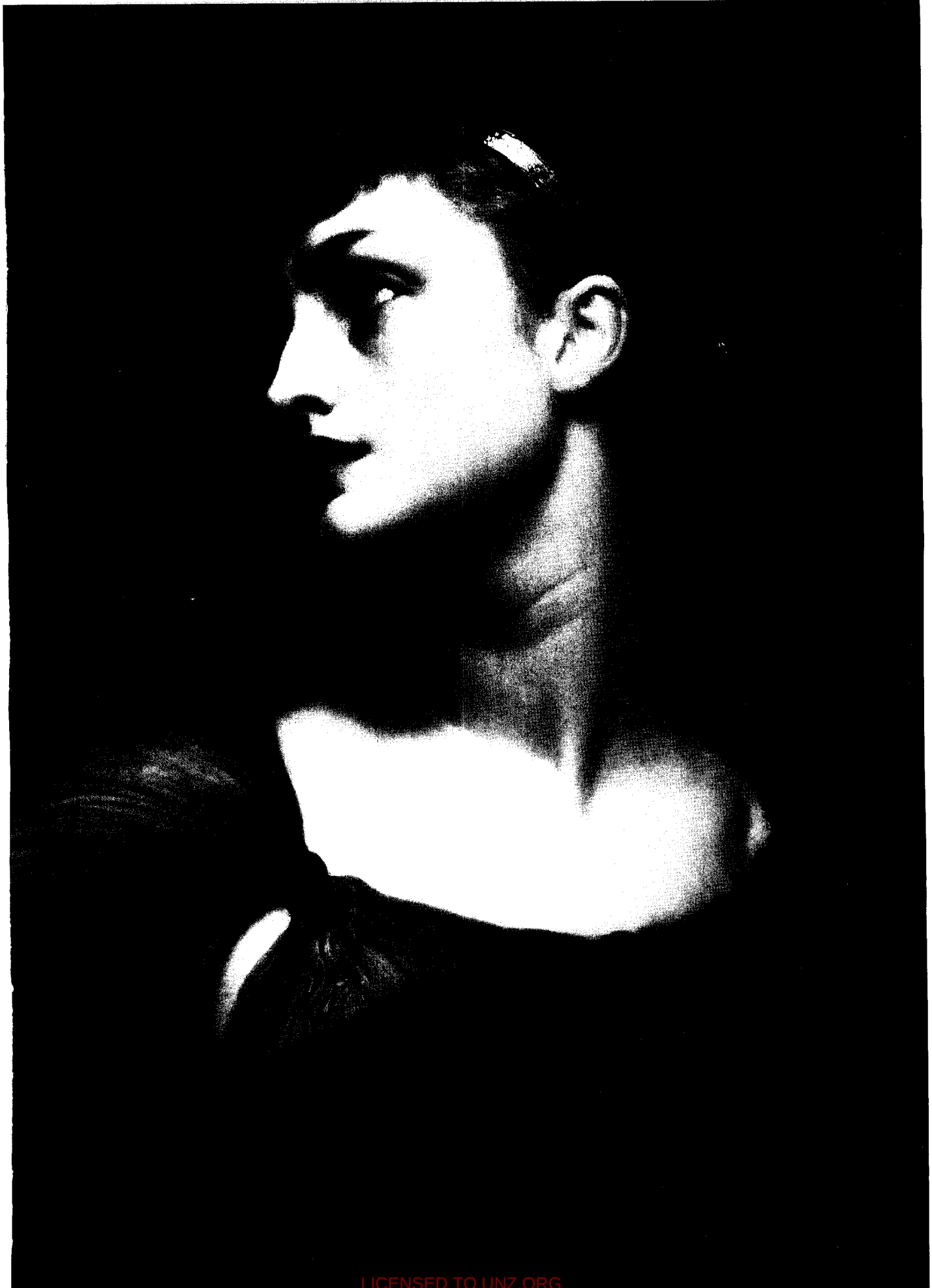

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who has not yet realized his potential. When Aristotle spoke of slaves as living instruments, he was referring not to any essential quality of theirs but to their social status. True, he offered no moving pleas for emancipation. But he did provide all the philosophical tools for producing that emancipation.

Alexander the Great, Aristotle's student, was the first apostle of intermarriage, creating a true model of cosmopolitanism and challenging the limited thinking—we would say racism—of his Macedonian comrades-in-arms, who had not had the opportunity to study with the Athenian philosopher. When Alexander seized the Persian city of Susa, what did he do? Like a good Aristotelian, he respected the city, took a native for his wife, and compelled his generals to do the same. None of this, again, is to say that the Judeo-Christian tradition is inimical to freedom. Historically, Judeo-Christianity has been a liberating force—Judaism constituted a formidable obstacle to the Roman Empire and its mad project of a world-state, while Christianity was a salutary ideology of emancipation for persecuted Romans. But conceptually, the Greeks anticipated everything to do with freedom.

The Greeks' tragic view of freedom even established principles with which to resist the worst. Modern conceptions of human rights based on a shared vision of ultimate ends are less persuasive than the Athenian vision, which highlights the direct experience of suffering and the solidarity of the humiliated and mistreated. A reading of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Thucydides illuminates the cruelty that pierces the evening news and amplifies our indignation. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, it's worth recalling, resulted from the bewilderment caused by the revelation of the death camps.

Even the separation of state and conscience can be found in the Athenian crucible. In 441 BC, well before the Gospels and "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's," Greece produced a powerful text on the subject: Sophocles's *Antigone*. King Creon forbids his niece Antigone to bury her brother, who has betrayed Thebes; Antigone defies the king, appealing to the unwritten laws of tradition; Creon changes his mind, but not soon enough, and Antigone, confined to a cave by her uncle, takes her own life.

There are three rival interpretations of *Antigone*. Some find in the play the affirmation of the superiority of ethics over politics, making Antigone the heroine of a universal moral law that overrides positive law. This reading is falsely edifying and kills the sense of tragedy. Others see in the story the conflict of two equally legitimate laws, with the ancient, unwritten religious law being surpassed by a modern, positive, and concrete law, anchored resolutely in historical progress. Thus Hegel sees in *Antigone* a tragedy in which two understandings of absolute legitimacy confront each other—and finally, he takes Creon's side, not because the king embodies justice but because he represents a new stage of history, dear to the German philosopher's heart: the regulatory state. Hegel views this founding Western drama through the lens of a progressivism that attributes a positive meaning to the development of history—a progressivism wholly foreign to Sophocles.

The third and most powerful interpretation blames the catastrophe on a violation of the border between two worlds or two laws. One, Creon's, accords the state the power to guarantee individual freedom; his are the laws of the day. The other, Antigone's, holds that the individual must have other reasons, both personal and legitimate, for defending her freedom, such as her moral and religious beliefs; hers are the laws of the night. Neither law is superior to the other; each has its own sphere. But Creon gives in to the immoderation of political power, going beyond the limits of daylight and unleashing chaos by requiring that his laws rule the night's territory as well—the region of intimate morality and death.

On this reading, the sacred thing that Creon violates is not some universal commandment that Antigone incarnates and that would apply to everyone. Antigone is the heroine, instead, of the separation of day and night, of politics and morality, of public and private. Even before Jesus, she reminds us that there are a space and time in which Caesar's commands in the name

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of public welfare are perfectly legitimate, and another space, another time, in which not Caesar but God commands—or, from a secular viewpoint, civil society, morality, and custom. The freedom of the individual need not destroy itself in the duties of the citizen.

Here we encounter the Aristotelian and, more broadly, Greek sense of the "right mean": Antigone is the heroine of the right mean between the violent excess of power (Creon's *hybris*) and complacent passivity (demonstrated by Antigone's sister Ismene, who also loves her brother but won't defy Creon). The separation between Caesar and God, as Christ formulated it, would come as no surprise to Antigone.

Virtue consists of the right mean, meaning not indecision or softness but a point of equilibrium of human freedom.

It happens that Athens's ultimate problem was this *hybris*, this loss of measure, which always threatens freedom. As Thucydides showed, this imprudence was at once the motor of Athenian liberty and the cause of its fall. Athens was not always able to find the right mean between movement and rest, innovation and conservation, expansion and restriction. It pitched drunkenly between those poles and ultimately smashed against the reefs of impetuousness.

In light of Athens's difficulties, Aristotle makes the question of the right mean the central problem of philosophy. Virtue consists of the right mean, meaning not indecision or softness but a point of equilibrium (which we must always rediscover) of human freedom. For freedom invariably produces disequilibrium. To live freely, in other words, is constantly to seek equilibrium within disequilibrium. Aristotle counsels neither pure rest nor extreme movement. It can even happen that excess can be good—in a situation characterized by excess. The right mean is determined by suitability to the challenges of the world and of the moment. This is the antidote to *hybris*.

The struggle for the right mean has been the West's major problem since the time of Athens. Athens's capital sin, the one that gnaws at Thucydides, is the destruction of Melos—just as the Greeks' original sin is the genocide of Troy, as subtly indicated by Homer and Aeschylus and as shouted out by Euripides. The utter massacre of the Melians—all the men wiped out, the women reduced to slavery—prepares the folly of the Sicilian expedition. At decisive moments like that one, the Athenians take themselves to be gods, believing themselves free of all restraints and free to flout everyone's freedom.

We can look at the Iraq War against this backdrop of the right mean. To allow Saddam Hussein to continue to torture and massacre his subjects and neighbors was one extreme; to strike out blindly demonstrated the opposite extreme, as we saw, for example, at Abu Ghraib. Having taken the side of those who favored militarily deposing the tyrant, I held my breath and crossed my fingers to see how things would turn out. I wasn't reassured until the day when an Iraqi journalist dared, in Baghdad, to throw his shoes at the president of the United States of America. That never could have happened to Saddam Hussein or in any other authoritarian regime—China, Russia, the rest of the Arab world. For his insolence, the perpetrator did receive some prison time, but under Saddam, he would have lost his nose, ears, and tongue, and probably his life. The protester thus provided, despite himself, the proof that freedom had taken steps forward and that America was more Greek than Roman.

Athens did not perfectly succeed, and it eventually collapsed—just as our own democracies may someday collapse. I do not believe in the eternity of systems, even our own. Those founded on the attempted negation of chaos and the suppression of freedom will, I hope, collapse sooner. But those founded on freedom may be destroyed by the imbalance inherent in their constitutions, an imbalance that animates and sometimes consumes them.

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The Destiny of Cities

Throughout history, forces both natural and human have made cities rise and fall.

Victor Davis Hanson

As the world steadily grows more urbanized, with 50 percent of its population no longer rural, it is more important than ever to ask how cities either perish or manage to survive. The question can be hard to answer. Why, following centuries of periodic depopulation and neglect, are Rome and Athens once again capitals, while Leptis Magna and Ephesus—once-thriving imperial powerhouses on the coasts of Libya and Turkey, respectively—are long deserted? Was it climate, or location, or a larger cultural tradition of resilience that eventually brought Rome and Athens back in a way that didn't happen with the other two cities?

Or consider the puzzle of Istanbul. Where the Ottoman city now stands, there was once Roman Constantinople—itself built atop Greek Byzantium. Cultures and religions came and went; the promontory between the Bosporus and the Dardanelles, as a window on East and West, remained the same. Was the great urban center's continuance predicated, perhaps, on the successful traditions of commerce and science that evolved during its Greek centuries (600 BC to AD 300)—a legacy that endured through the Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman Empires?

One common answer is that location is all. Mexico City, the ancestral capital of the Aztec kingdom, continues to thrive, its sprawl now teeming with well over 10 million residents. Apparently, the city's central administrative location, rich surrounding farmland, and room to expand remained constant enticements over the successive tenures of the Aztec, Spanish, and Mexican governments.

On the other hand, few in 1920 would have thought that booming Detroit would shrink to a mere 800,000 residents by the millennium, with large swaths reverting to urban prairie land. But the city's favored proximity with Canada, its access to the Great Lakes, and its nearness to midwestern steelmaking proved no match for rising crime, taxes, and racial unrest. Similarly, the reason that sleepy, landlocked Charlotte, North Carolina, now blossoms as a global financial center isn't any port or navigable river but rather its relatively low taxes, light regulations, cheaper living, nearby universities, plentiful land, probusiness climate, and quality of life.

But if the key to urban survival is more complicated than mere location, are there general rules that account for the rise and fall of the world's great cities? And might they shed light on the historical trajectory of our own great cities—beginning with New York?

One way of answering that question is to examine the three kinds of events that have destroyed cities over the centuries. The most

LOUIS JEAN DESPREZ, "THE GREAT ERUPTION OF MT. VESUVIUS"/PRIVATE COLLECTION/THE BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY INTERNATIONAL

The eruption of Mount Vesuvius obliterated Pompeii and Herculaneum.

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obvious is natural calamity. Often, the very factors that allow cities to thrive—proximity to the coast or location on a river, for example—ensure great natural risks. Opulent Pompeii and Herculaneum, the luxurious Roman resorts that provide much of the background for bawdy accounts in Petronius and Suetonius, capitalized on their coastal locations, their proximity to Rome, and their rich volcanic soil, which ensured a thriving viticulture. But location near a volcano is a mixed blessing: both cities were buried in ash and mud in just a few days when Mount Vesuvius erupted in AD 79. Present-day Naples may also have a rendezvous with Vesuvius that not even the most sophisticated technology can prevent. It is no accident that vanishingly few of the world's enduring major cities have currently active volcanoes in their skylines; even today, a volcanic eruption can render the most modern societies impotent.

Earthquakes are a different matter. For one thing, they are harder to predict, and it is harder to know which locations are safe from them. Also, their effect on cities often depends on the subsequent civic response. The earthquake that struck Concepción, Chile, in February 2010 was 500 times stronger than what had hit Port-au-Prince, Haiti, a month earlier. But poorer building codes and the chronic inability of a failed government to react to disaster ensured far greater damage in Haiti. One wonders whether Port-au-Prince will ever revive; it will more likely become a Mogadishu than a San Juan, unless some kind of international Marshall Plan bypasses the corrupt statism of the Haitian government.

Culture also explains, surely, why New Orleans remains populated. The city is below sea level, and flooding from both the Gulf Coast and the Mississippi delta has historically dealt it a one-two punch—yet the resilient city always bounced back. Still, New Orleans's population is increasingly dependent on public assistance as traditional jobs in shipping, oil exploitation, and manufacturing have dried up. Like Venice, another sometimes flooded city, New Orleans will have to find ways to overcome its unfavorable location, or at least guarantee that its tourist advantages outweigh its susceptibility to flooding (see "Big Easy Rising," page 56).

Not all natural disasters are spectacular. By late antiquity, the silting of the Maeander River had left the seaport of Miletus, in present-day Turkey, in a malarial marsh without an adequate harbor. That natural process eventually destroyed the city's prosperity. Miletus had been a window onto the eastern Mediterranean and the hub of a rich Ionia; it could draw on the best of Hellenistic and Roman technology. But massive dredging operations proved beyond the capability of even the best classical engineers. Today, it is deserted.

Just as destructive as nature to history's great cities are foreign invasion and conquest: think of Rome's proverbial salting of the soil of old Punic Carthage, or the Allied firebombing and incineration of Dresden and Hamburg. Here nature, again, plays a part: sailing up the Thames to sack London, or up the Tiber to destroy Rome, was always more difficult than landing on the plain of an exposed Troy or Carthage. But man-made defenses are also imperative. What kept Constantinople safe for 1,000 years after civilization fell in the West were not just the natural defenses of the long channel of the Hellespont and narrows at the Bosporus but also the city's great walled network—the largest investment in labor and capital in the ancient world. It wasn't breached until the Ottomans unleashed their huge, European-made artillery upon it.

In modern times, with nation-empires wielding sophisticated airborne, marine, and cyberspace weaponry, natural impediments like rivers, hills, and walls have become less important for municipal defense. What keeps America's cities secure today is the nation's nuclear shield. For the foreseeable future, that deterrent ensures a death sentence to any foreign enemy that would seek to destroy American cities by air, land, or sea.

A third kind of disaster—often proving more harmful to cities than either natural cataclysms or barbarian hordes—is changing demography and commerce. St. Louis, to take an obvious example, is no longer a bustling gateway to the West for explorers and settlers.

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Economic change is especially damaging if a city doesn't have a culture flexible enough to adapt to it. So Oakland, which will probably not prosper again as the supply base for equipping an expanding Pacific military, seems unlikely to redefine itself as a trading depot for Chinese-American trade, given its poor governance, racial tension, crime, bad schools, and high rates of illiteracy. Picturesque but ill-governed San Francisco may soon be outclassed by the far rainier and colder Seattle and Vancouver, which have translated their cosmopolitan eagerness for Asian trade and state-of-the-art computer technology into prosperity that might have been more logical in richer, warmer California. And unless the citizens of Rotterdam and Amsterdam become more prolific, change their attitudes toward unchecked Islamic immigration, or figure out how to assimilate Muslims into Dutch culture, neither city will retain its commercial or shipping prominence for long.

Economic change is especially destructive if a city doesn't have a culture flexible enough to adapt to it.

Some cities, like Chicago and New York, have managed to make the transition profitably from the industrial age into computer-driven globalization. That recovery seemed close to impossible in 1960s New York, where unsustainable union wages, race riots, crime, corruption, and municipal deficits seemed to presage a backwater. Popular predictions of doom began in the late fifties, when baseball's Giants and Dodgers moved to the West Coast, and continued into the seventies and eighties with apocalyptic movies like *Death Wish* and *Escape from New York*, in which the night belonged to a rampaging underclass. The 1979 film *The Warriors* was an updated Xenophon's *Anabasis*, with battling gang members seeking to return home from the Bronx to Coney Island through the various hostile tribes of a lawless city.

Yet by the 1990s, better political leadership introduced more sensible tax policies and, most importantly, tough law enforcement, which, combined with a population that was increasingly multiracial rather than biracial, helped New York recover and prosper in a way that, say, dysfunctional Detroit probably will not. Updating local traditions of expertise—via urban universities and an engaged downtown aristocracy—was instrumental in the recovery. That's why it's hard to imagine more than one or two Persian Gulf play cities surviving the end of the oil age. The half-dozen oil towns in Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates may have soaring skylines, but the skyscrapers reflect few cultural advantages. The Gulf's current oil-based prosperity is based almost entirely on imported technology and Western expertise. When the oil runs out, or the world evolves beyond an oil-based economy, many of the Gulf capitals will probably resemble not Las Vegas but Bodie, California—a former desert boomtown that dried up when its mines closed and the capital fled.

s they consider two of the three ways that cities can die, New Yorkers can rest easy: neither natural disasters nor foreign enemies are likely to destroy Gotham. It is seismically stable, for one thing. And after nearly four centuries of existence, it is hard to believe that New York will be wiped out by any of the other natural dangers—hurricanes, droughts, silting—that have ended great port cities of the past. Its natural location can feed and support millions in confined spaces, while promoting culture and finance in a way unmatched elsewhere. True, believers in man-made climate change warn that the rising waters of the Atlantic Ocean could flood the great cities of the eastern seaboard and perhaps send the sea into the low-lying areas of Manhattan. But if that is New York's fate in the next century, then it shares the challenge with most of the eastern coastal United States, which can be expected to answer rising waters with impressive

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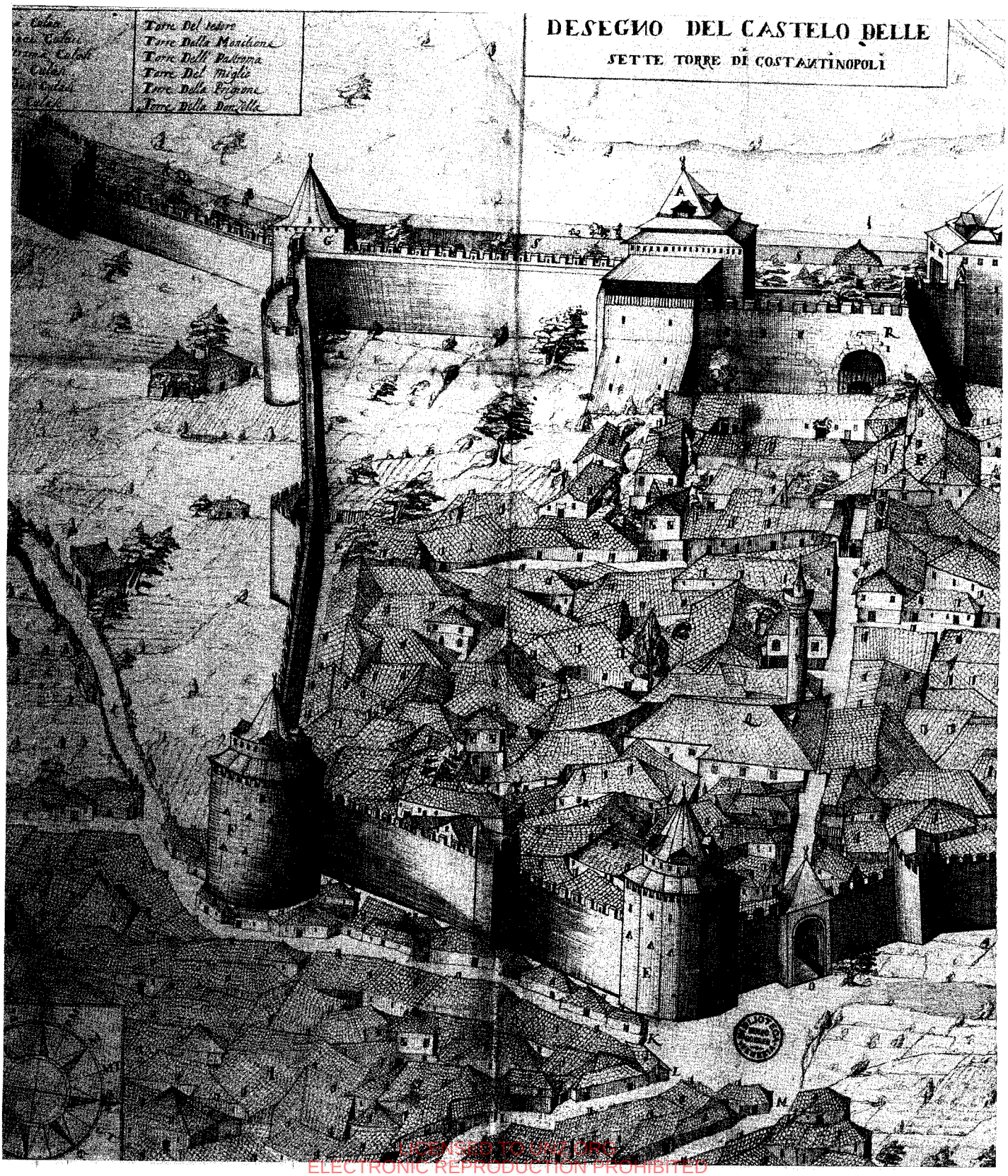

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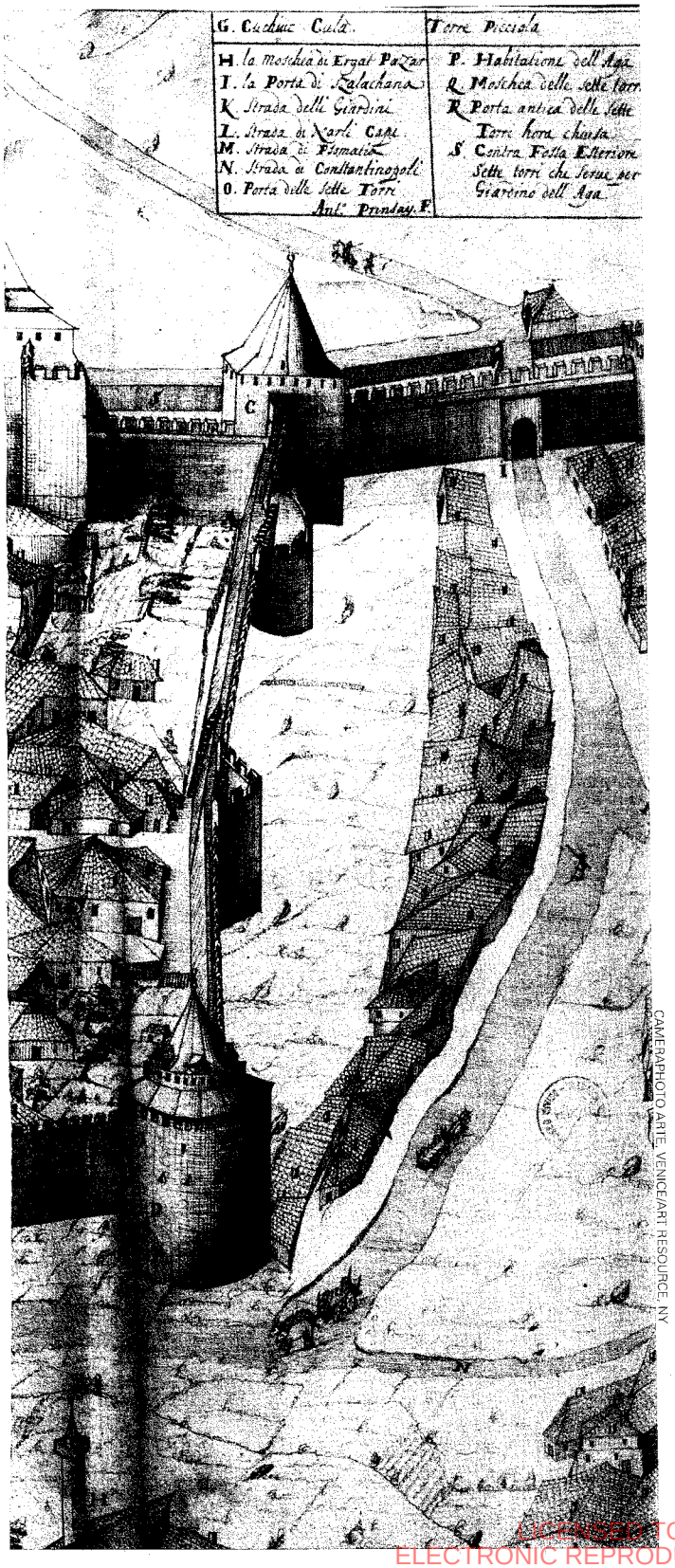
G. Cacduc Cula.
Torre Picciola
H. la Moschea di Ergat Pazar
I. la Porta di Galachana
K. Strada delli Giardini
L. Strada di Karli Capi
M. Strada di Fismatie
N. Strada di Constantinopoli
O. Porta delle Sette Torri
Aul. Prunday. F.
P. Habitatione dell'Aga
Q. Moschea delle sette Torri
R. Porta antica delle Sette Torri hora chiusa
S. Contra Fossa Esterior
Sette torri che seruo per Giardino dell'Aga

CAMERAPHOTO ARTE VENICE/ART RESOURCE, NY

technological counterresponses, such as seawalls and pumps of the sort that we now see in New Orleans.

More likely, New York will continue to benefit from the favorable location and natural advantages that served as catalysts to its original rise as an American megalopolis. It lies halfway between the nation's capital and Boston, with good access to freshwater and nearby farmland. The Hudson River, Staten Island, and Long Island continue to promote a synergy of population growth and trade. For a northern city, it has an abundance of sunshine and only a few weeks per year of oppressive snow or heat.

Of course, New York is subject to enormous vulnerability when a power outage or inclement weather interrupts the heating, cooling, water, and sewage of millions. But it has ample urban backup systems and immediate access to an interconnected United States of some 300 million people. The metropolis also has a resilient, independent population very different from the docile subjects who were ordered about by a handful of high clerks in thirteenth-century BC Mycenae—and who were powerless to keep farming, trading, and defending themselves when the palatial apparat collapsed.

After Islamic terrorists incinerated 16 acres of the World Trade Center complex in lower Manhattan on September 11, 2001, a catastrophic attack on New York was no longer an abstraction. Iconic skyscrapers, monumental bridges, the Stock Exchange, and other landmarks became potential liabilities, rather than proud trademarks of unassailable success. Sure enough, plenty of terrorist plots have taken aim at everything from the Brooklyn Bridge and the subway system to Times Square and Madison Square Garden. And one can conjure up all sorts of future scenarios that might decimate New York: a dirty bomb let off in Grand Central Terminal, anthrax scattered on the Stock Exchange floor, lethal chemicals poured into the water system.

But such plots assume foreign assistance, a network of terrorists, and months of planning. And so far, at least, the NYPD and federal

For 1,000 years, Constantinople's mighty fortifications protected the city from invaders.

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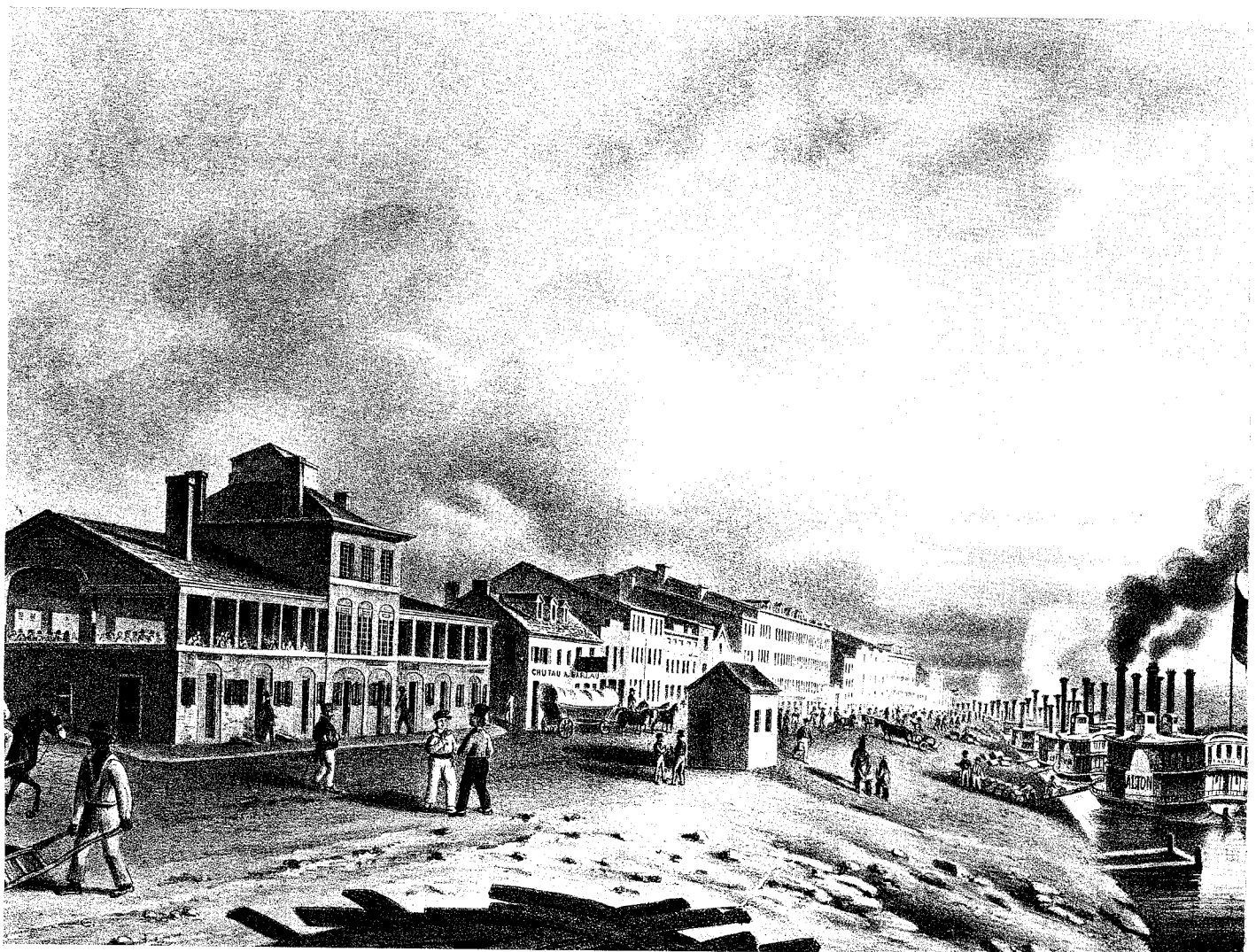

In the nineteenth century, St. Louis was a thriving gateway to the American West.

authorities have proved adept at infiltrating and dismantling Islamic terrorist cabals. Indeed, New York's size and correspondingly large resources have given its law enforcement agencies the ability to keep one step ahead of the enemy. Even 9/11 itself was a testament to the city's resilience: its reaction differed radically from the way Port-au-Prince responded to disaster.

In short, New York remains a secure place for financiers and captains of industry to profit and thrive—essential to the city's survival, as it is no longer an industrial powerhouse, agricultural center, or nexus for state or federal government. As for demographic change, illegal immigration may be a nuisance to New York, but the city's location ensures that the problem won't get out of hand—as it has in Phoenix and Los Angeles, both a few days' hike for millions who want to enter the United States.

What *could* actually end New York, at least as we know it, is commercial failure. The chief danger would be a massive flight of capital, the sort

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of fate that doomed Renaissance Florence as a banking center. By the seventeenth century, the riches of the New World, Europe's bustling Atlantic seaports, and Florence's internecine tribal feuding finally made irrelevant the Medicis' traditional role as the financial hub facilitating eastern Mediterranean commerce with Asia's overland spice and silk routes. When Florence's commercial income ran out and its bankers left, the Florentine cultural renaissance ended. By the eighteenth-century age of the franc, guilder, peso, and pound, it was hard to remember that between 1300 and 1500, the florin had been Europe's benchmark gold coin.

Examples abound of capital fleeing cities and taking culture with it. Long before the Reconquista drove Islam out of Iberia, eleventh-century Muslim Córdoba—increasingly ill-governed and burdened with court intrigue—tired of its allegiance to free thought, no longer welcomed freewheeling commerce, and became an intolerant Islamic backwater where books were burned rather than produced. Timbuktu, a sixteenth-century crossroads between northern and western Africa, declined as a center for learning after slave traffic and the gold and salt trade routes shifted. Money drives art and culture, and without the ongoing creation of prosperity, higher pursuits die on the vine.

If New York's financial class fears that New York is becoming a completely redistributive city, it will likewise begin to leave. Already, the combined state and city income-tax rate is 12.62 percent for the highest earners, and in 2011, if Congress adopts President Obama's tax policies, the combined federal, state, and local tax bite on each added dollar of income for those earners will exceed 50 percent for the first time in 25 years (see "Empire of Excess," Winter 2010). New York's increasingly confiscatory and redistributive policies, then, could drive capital to lower-tax southern or midwestern states eager to have it. There is nothing to prevent Charlotte from taking over New York's preeminent banking role, or Dallas–Fort Worth—America's fastest-growing urban center—from becoming the nation's corporate capital. Atlanta, Denver, and Seattle could just as easily divide up much of New York's cultural leadership.

Capitalists might also flee America's climbing tax rates and regulations and re-create New York abroad by outsourcing its financial disciplines to Frankfurt, Zurich, Tokyo, Shanghai, and Singapore. The resulting impoverishment back home, in which spiraling municipal deficits would lead to calls for higher taxes on the fewer remaining high-income earners, would leave New York's current attractions—musical performances, literature, theater, museums, foundations, and universities—without the high-octane financial fuel that propels them.

If New York's financial class fears that New York is becoming a completely redistributive city, it will begin to leave.

We can already see such a pernicious cycle at the state level in bankrupt California. There, 2,000 to 3,000 high earners are believed to be departing each week for low-tax red states. They are leaving behind less than 1 percent of the population to pay a majority of the state's income taxes, which have climbed to a rate of over 10 percent on top incomes. Yet the highest income, sales, and gasoline taxes in the nation have not ensured California either greater state revenue or balanced budgets.

In such a scenario, New York might become to finance what Detroit is to automaking: a place where the government regulates and even runs formerly dynamic private financial enterprises that have lost their competitive edge to leaner firms abroad. New York might then become something like contemporary Venice or Florence: a vast museum, its nineteenth- and twentieth-century cultural treasures forever frozen under glass for hordes of ticket-paying summertime gawkers, its money made by displaying the old rather than by creating the new.

JOHN CASPAR WILD, "FRONT STREET, ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, 1840"/COLLECTION OF THE NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY/THE BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY INTERNATIONAL

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How American Press Freedom Began on Wall Street

Myron Magnet

A 1735 libel trial in New York's City Hall proved revolutionary.

The corner of Wall and Nassau Streets where Federal Hall now stands—opposite the New York Stock Exchange and J. P. Morgan's old office—is sacred ground for American liberty. In the cupola-crowned City Hall built there in 1699, representatives of the American colonies called themselves together for the first time, in the Stamp Act Congress of 1765, and declared their "undoubted right" not to be taxed but "with their own consent." In May 1789, four days after George Washington's inauguration on the balcony of the refurbished building, just renamed Federal Hall and housing the new Senate and House of Representatives, congressman James Madison opened debate on a proposed Bill of Rights, which he guided to the necessary two-thirds majorities in both chambers by the end of that summer. In that same building over half a century earlier, by a sweet coincidence, the free speech, free press, and trial by jury that the Bill of Rights protects had won their first great vindication in British America, in the famous 1735 seditious-libel case of printer John Peter Zenger. Its dramatic outcome put British authorities sharply on notice that Americans believed that they had certain God-given rights and would not give them up without a fight.

The trial had its origins in a spat over money that quickly escalated into a battle over fundamental rights and legitimate authority. When a new royal governor, William Cosby, arrived in New York in 1732, he demanded that the senior provincial council member, Rip Van Dam, give him half the salary that Van Dam had received as acting governor before Cosby reached the New World. Fair enough, according to custom; but Van Dam countered that he'd relinquish the £1,000 or so at issue only if Cosby gave him half the £6,400 worth of perks that the governor had already raked in even before starting his new job.

Cosby, ill-educated, ill-tempered, and implacable, decided to sue—but in which court? Since his greedy imperiousness had begun offending New Yorkers the moment he landed, he knew he daren't trust an ordinary jury, and he couldn't turn to the nonjury Chancery Court, of which he was the ex-officio judge, since even he didn't have the brass to hear his own case. His solution: to ask the colony's Supreme Court, whose judges were gubernatorial appointees, to sit as an equity Exchequer Court, an unusual but not unheard-of ploy that further inflamed New Yorkers, who reasonably thought that trials without juries violated their rights as freeborn British subjects.

Lewis Morris, chief justice since 1715 and owner of the vast Morrisania manor in Westchester, didn't like the tactic, either, and vigorously agreed in April 1733 with Van Dam's capable lawyers, James Alexander and William Smith, who objected that the proposed hocus-pocus of transmuting the Supreme Court into a juryless equity court was improper and illegal. Morris rebuked his two fellow justices for taking the opposite view, and published his rebuke. Cosby responded by summarily firing him in August and elevating loyal supporter James De Lancey to the chief justiceship instead. By so doing, he created in Morris, Alexander, and Smith powerful, canny enemies who could now attack him on the constitutional grounds that he had tried to take away a citizen's property without the due process of a jury trial, and that he had arbitrarily dismissed a

The nation's first opposition newspaper argued for freedom of the press—and vindicated it in court.

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THE

New-York Weekly JOURNAL

Containing the freſheſt Advices, Foreign, and Domeſtick.

MUNDAY November 12, 1733.

Mr. *Zenger.*

INcert the following in your next, and you'll oblige your Friend,

CATO.

Mira temporum felicitas ubi ſentiri quæ velis, & quæ ſentias dicere licit.

Tacit.

THE Liberty of the Preſs is a Subject of the greateſt Importance, and in which every Individual is as much concern'd as he is in any other Part of Liberty: Therefore it will not be improper to communicate to the Publick the Sentiments of a late excellent Writer upon this Point. ſuch is the Elegance and Perſpicuity of his Writings, ſuch the inimitable Force of his Reaſoning, that it will be difficult to ſay any Thing new that he has not ſaid, or not to ſay that much worſe which he has ſaid.

There are two Sorts of Monarchies, an abſolute and a limited one. In the firſt, the Liberty of the Preſs can never be maintained, it is inconſiſtent with it; for what abſolute Monarch would ſuffer any Subject to animadvert on his Actions, when it is in his Power to declare the Crime, and to nominate the Puniſhment? This would make it very dangerous to exerciſe ſuch a Liberty Beſides the Object againſt which thoſe Pens muſt be directed, is their Sovereign, the ſole ſupream Maiſtrate; for there being no Law in thoſe Monarchies, but the Will of the Prince, it makes it neceſſary for his Miniſters to conſult his Pleaſure, before any Thing can be undertaken: He is therefore properly chargeable with the Grievances of his Subjects, and what the Miniſter there acts being in Obedience to the Prince, he ought not to incur the Hatred of the People; for it would be hard to impute that to him for a Crime, which is the Fruit of his Allegiance, and for refuſing which he might incur the Penalties of Treaſon. Beſides, in an abſolute Monarchy, the Will of the Prince being the Law, a Liberty of the Preſs to complain of Grievances would be complaining againſt the Law, and the Conſtitution, to which they have ſubmitted, or have been obliged to ſubmit; and therefore in one Senſe, may be ſaid to deſerve Puniſhment, So that under an abſolute Monarchy, I ſay, ſuch a Liberty is inconſiſtent with the Conſtitution, having no proper Subject in Politics, on which it might be exercis'd, and if exercis'd would incur a certain Penalty.

But in a limited Monarchy, as *England* is, our Laws are known, fixed and eſtabliſhed. They are the ſtreigh Rule and ſure Guide to direct the King, the Miniſters, and other his Subjects: And therefore an Offence againſt the Laws is ſuch an Offence againſt the Conſtitution as ought to receive a proper adequate Puniſhment; the leverer

Conſtiti

THE GRANGER COLLECTION

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judge for trying to protect basic rights.

Attack him they did, with guns blazing. On the political front, Morris and his son began campaigning only weeks after the chief justice's firing as anti-Cosby candidates for seats in the provincial assembly, which they won in the November 1733 election, and they began recruiting anti-administration candidates for the next autumn's New York City Common Council elections. More important, on November 5, 1733, James Alexander and other Morris allies launched America's first opposition newspaper, the *New-York Weekly Journal*, which Alexander edited and largely wrote. Most articles appeared under pseudonyms, though; the only name on the masthead was John Peter Zenger, the paper's 36-year-old printer, who had arrived in America among the 2,000 to 3,000 Germans fleeing from famine in the Palatinate in 1710—the biggest German immigration of colonial times and part of Queen Anne's effort to people her New World empire. After an apprenticeship to the King's Printer in New York, Zenger had set up on his own, turning out tracts, pamphlets, and textbooks in English and Dutch.

The *Journal*'s attacks could be scurrilous, especially in its mock classified ads. One, searching for a runaway monkey given to "grimace and chattering," broadly caricatured Cosby. Another, seeking a lost spaniel that fetched and carried fulsome "Panagericks" (on Cosby) to the establishment newspaper, lampooned gubernatorial toady and political appointee Francis Harison.

But most often, Alexander anchored his critique in a carefully explained political theory of British constitutionalism, much of which he learned, as did so many American colonists, from *Cato's Letters*, written a decade earlier by the hugely influential radical English Whig journalists John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon. Alexander, who regularly reprinted Trenchard and Gordon in the *New-York Weekly Journal*, didn't follow their Lockean radicalism all the way—not explicitly, anyway. He never went so far as to say, as *Cato* No. 11 succinctly declared, that "the sole end of men's entering into political societies, was mutual protection and defence; and whatever power does not contribute to these purposes, is not government, but usurpation." But he wholeheartedly endorsed *Cato*'s theory of limited monarchy, where the laws protect everyone's basic rights against all state authorities, from the king on down.

Central to this scheme is a free press, as Alexander explains in the second and third issues of the *Journal*, which purport to be a letter from Cato himself. Nothing restrains a "powerful and wicked" minister so effectively as a free press, Alexander argues. It can "awaken his conscience, . . . sting him with the dread of punishment, cover him with shame, and render his actions odious." Indeed, he asserts, "This advantage . . . of exposing the exorbitant crimes of wicked ministers under a limited monarchy makes the liberty of the press not only consistent with, but a necessary part of, the constitution itself." So crucial is this right, concludes Alexander, paraphrasing Trenchard and Gordon, that "no nation ancient or modern ever lost the liberty of freely speaking, writing, or publishing their sentiments but forthwith lost their liberty in general and became slaves."

Thus cloaked in the British constitution, Alexander, a Scottish-born former attorney general of New Jersey, set to flaying Cosby with patriotic fervor. Was it "prudent in an English governor to suffer a Frenchman to view our fortifications, sound our harbors, etc.?" asked the *Journal* after Cosby permitted a French warship to do just that. "Could we not, by seizing their papers and confining their persons, have prevented them in great measure from making use of the discoveries they made"—as Cosby failed to do? The same December 17, 1733, issue of the paper went on to remind readers that Cosby had arbitrarily displaced Chief Justice Morris and had added to the provincial council a newcomer to New York whose main distinction is "having first been and still he is, one of His

Lawyer James Alexander, the *Journal*'s editor and chief writer

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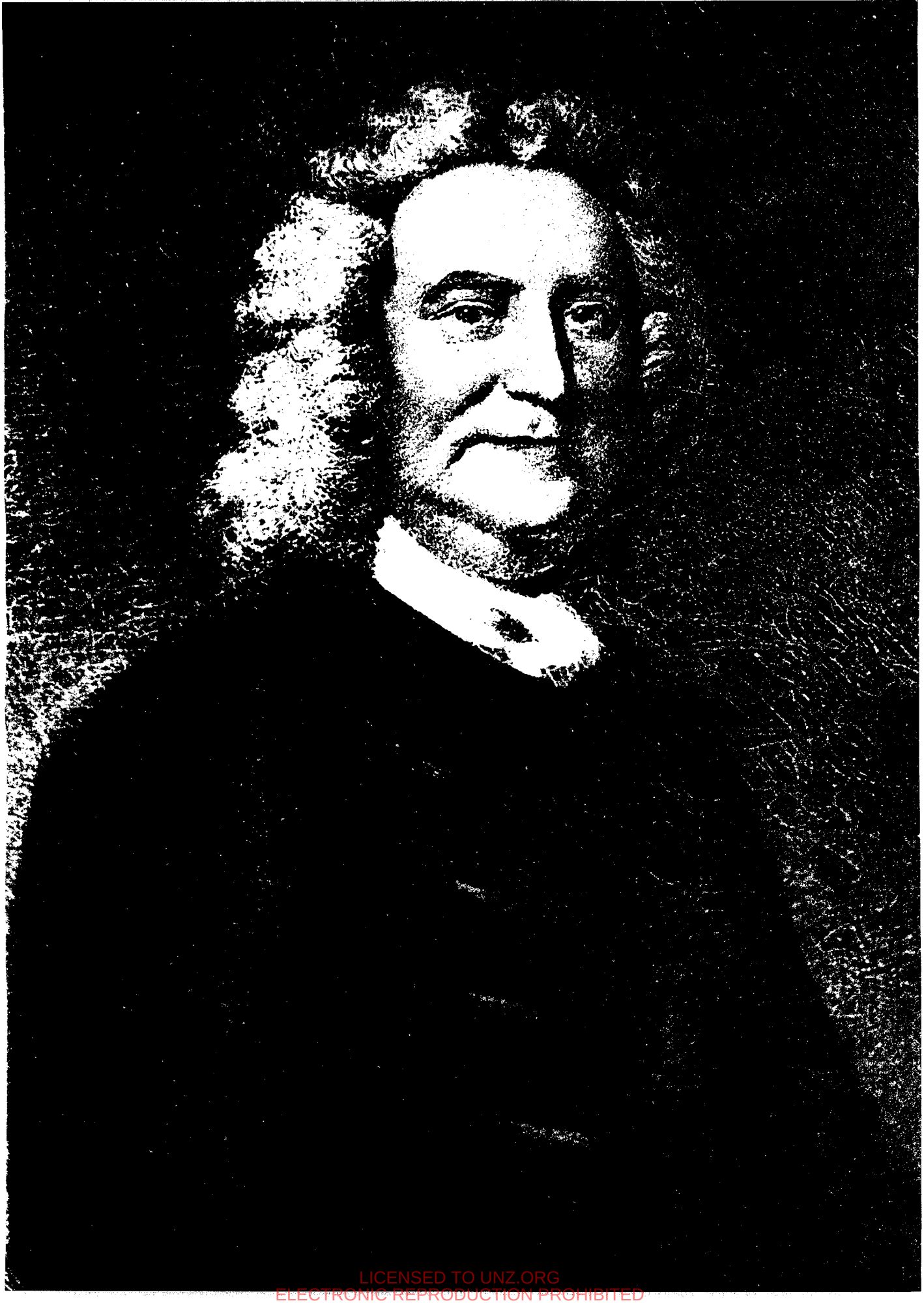

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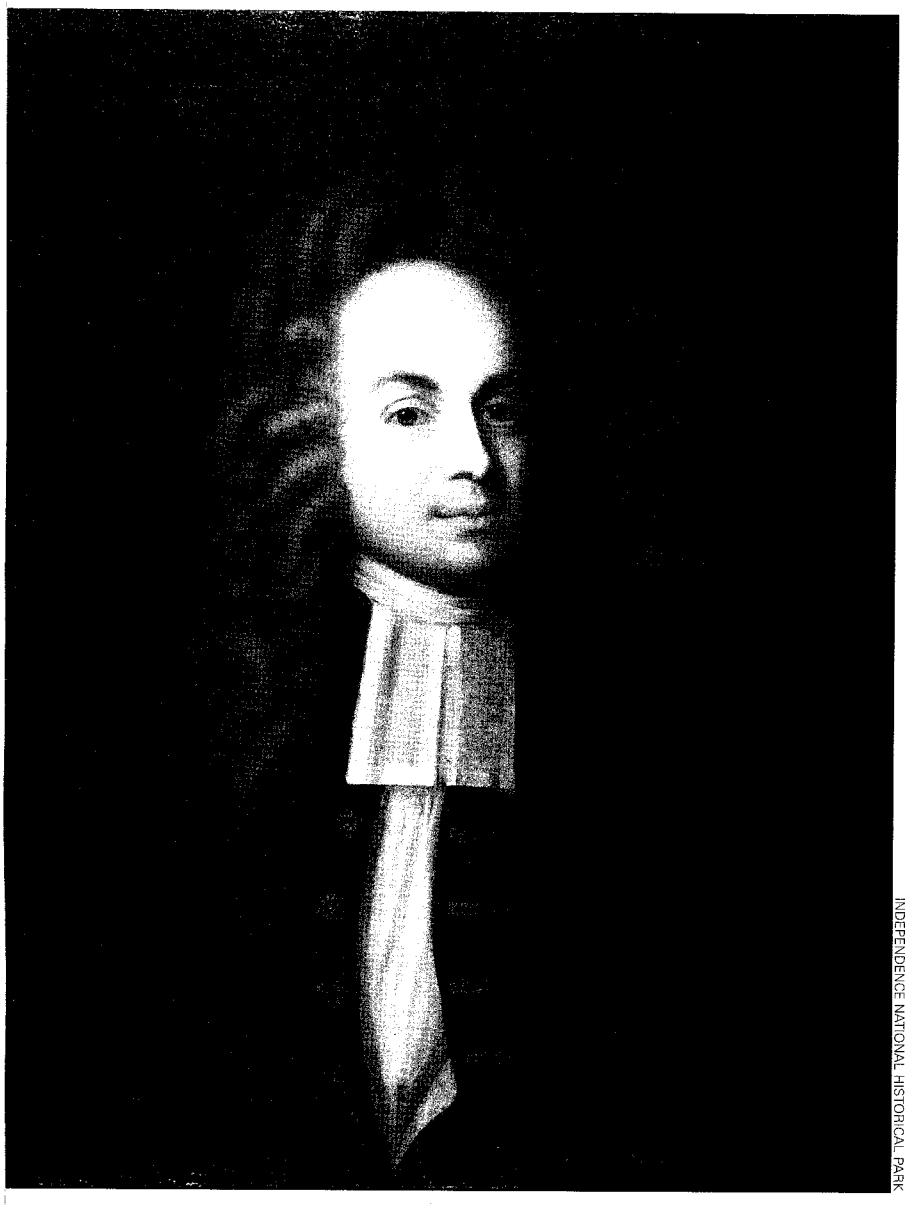

INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Fearless, eloquent, and combative, Andrew Hamilton of Philadelphia was the greatest American lawyer of his time.

Excellency's counsel in his suit . . . against the Honorable Rip Van Dam. Esq."

Surely, Cosby thought, he didn't have to put up with this. Accordingly, at the start of the new year, the governor's newly installed Chief Justice De Lancey, aged 30, asked the grand jury to indict whoever was responsible for all the seditious libels recently circulating in the province. The 19 jurors demurred.

Enflamed and emboldened, Alexander excoriated with redoubled zeal. "THE PEOPLE of this city . . . think, as matters now stand, that their LIBERTIES and PROPERTIES are precarious, and that SLAVERY is like to be entailed on them and their posterity, if some past things be not amended," he thundered in the January 28, 1734, issue. After all, "the liberty of the press is now struck at, which is the safeguard of all our other liberties." And sure enough, he charged in the April 8 number, "I think the law itself is at an end: We see men's deeds destroyed, judges arbitrarily displaced, new courts erected without consent of the legislature, by which it seems to me trials by juries are taken away when a governor pleases." What a list of malefactions!—the arbitrary firing of Chief Justice Morris (as well as the later firing of a local judge, Vincent Matthews) for upholding the law, the enchantment of the Supreme Court into a juryless Exchequer Court, and Cosby's high-handedly permitting the Mohawk Indians to burn a deed by which they had transferred land to Albany settlers. With such goings-on, "Who is then in that province that call anything his own, or enjoy any liberty longer than those in the administration will condescend to let him do it?"

Less than a week before the Common Council elections, the *Journal* took one last swipe. Contrary to custom, it remarked, the governor made a practice of sitting in with the

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provincial council and meddling in its legislative function, as Van Dam had earlier complained to the Board of Trade in London. Such interference by a veto-wielding executive officer subverted the constitutional separation of powers, a concept well understood since antiquity, though still a decade away from getting its modern formulation by Montesquieu. Laws made in this way, the *Journal* opined, are "a nullity"—and "making a nullity of the constitution not only infers but introduces a *nullity of liberty*."

The September 29, 1734, Common Council elections gave the Morrisite candidates a landslide. A week later, the *Journal* gloated by printing the list of victors and remarking that all but one "were put up by an interest opposite to the Governor's," while all the losers were Cosby supporters. Twisting the knife, Zenger printed a broadside with two celebratory ballads right after the election. A sample:

Come on brave boys, let
  us be brave
For liberty and law,
Boldly despise the
  haughty knave,
That would keep us in
  awe. . . .
Though pettifogging
  knaves deny
Us rights of Englishmen;
We'll make the
  scoundrel rascal fly,
And ne'er return again.
Our judges they would
  chop and change
For those that serve
  their turn,
And will not surely
  think it strange
If they for this should
  mourn.

An outraged Cosby resolved to crush such effrontery. He asked a new grand jury for indictments over the "scandalous" songs, but though the jurors agreed that the ballads were libelous, they professed bewilderment as to who might have written or published them. Cosby then pressed the assembly and the provincial council to act. Though the assembly refused, the council voted on November 2 to order four issues of the *Journal* to be burned by the "common Hangman, or Whipper, by the pillory" and to direct the sheriff to arrest Zenger for publishing seditious libels "tending to raise factions and tumults among the people of this Province, inflaming their minds with contempt of His Majesty's government, and greatly disturbing the peace thereof." When New York's mayor and aldermen wouldn't let their hangman destroy the newspapers, the sheriff "delivered them unto the hands of his own Negro, and ordered him to put them into the fire, which he did," James Alexander later reported.

With Zenger hauled off to jail—it was in the garret of City Hall—on November 17, 1734, Alexander and Smith volunteered as his lawyers and went to bail him out. Elementary fairness, they soon learned, was not in the cards for the printer. As Alexander explains in his *Brief Narrative* of the case, published in 1736 (and splendidly annotated by Stanley Nider Katz for Harvard University Press), English law requires bail to be set within the accused's means. But for Zenger, whose net worth didn't reach £40, Chief Justice De Lancey set bail at £400, so the printer languished in his attic cell, plagued by its leaky roof and drafty window, for the next eight months. To compound the unfairness, when a grand jury yet again failed to indict Zenger in January 1735, Attorney General Richard Bradley filed an "information" against him, a way of bypassing a grand jury and charging someone without an indictment.

With so much legal hanky-panky, Alexander and Smith immediately called into question the basic legitimacy of the whole proceeding. They formally took "exception" to the commissions of De Lancey and his fellow judge, Frederick Philipse, which appointed them to serve "during pleasure" of the governor rather than "during good behavior," as was customary in England. As any reader of *Cato's Letters* would know, officials who serve "at pleasure" easily decline into tools and henchmen of the person who can fire them, if that superior is as arbitrary as Cosby showed himself in firing Morris, trampling judicial independence

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An imaginative depiction of the trial, with James De Lancey on the bench, John Peter Zenger in the dock, and Andrew Hamilton in his element

and further subverting the separation of powers. De Lancey understood Alexander and Smith's cheeky implication perfectly. And, proving them right by silencing them, he summarily disbarred them for their presumption.

Lawyerless after this unheard-of move, Zenger asked the court to appoint counsel for him, and De Lancey named John Chambers, a competent Cosbyite who pled his new client not guilty and asked for a so-called struck jury. Hankypanky marred even this normally fair jury-selection method, in which the court clerk randomly chooses 48 names of freeholders and allows both sides to reject a dozen each, with the jury picked by lot from the remaining 24. The

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THE GRANGER COLLECTION

48 "random" names included many non-freeholders, however, including some Cosby political appointees, along with his baker, tailor, and shoemaker. The court clerk pooh-poohed Chambers's protest, but even De Lancey couldn't swallow this particular injustice and ordered fair play, resulting in a half-Morrisite jury.

When the trial began on August 4, 1735, Chambers argued that there can be no libel without a specific victim, and he challenged the attorney general to prove whom exactly the supposedly libelous *Journal* articles targeted. When he sat down, it wasn't Attorney General Bradley who rose as expected, however.

t was America's foremost lawyer, Andrew Hamilton, of Philadelphia. Wary of Chambers, James Alexander had enlisted his good friend and fellow Scottish immigrant to defend Zenger pro bono. At 59, Hamilton was a vivid, accomplished political infighter who—according to lawyer Smith's historian son, William Smith, Jr.—"had art, eloquence, vivacity, and humor, was ambitious of fame, negligent of nothing to ensure success, and possessed a confidence which no terrors could awe." Heightening the drama of his unexpected appearance, Hamilton opened by saying, "I'll save Mr. Attorney the trouble of examining his witnesses" and "confess" that my client "both printed and published the two newspapers" for which he is being prosecuted.

Well, that ends it, replied Attorney General Bradley. "I think the jury must find a verdict for the King." After all, the law states—as it did at that time—that a libel is a libel even if it is true. As Bradley explained, government, which protects our lives, religion, and property, is too essential to allow people to weaken or subvert it by publishing scandal, whether true or false, about the magistrates who administer it. That way lies anarchy, and the law has always forbidden

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it. And that is why "the Governor and the chief persons in the government . . . had directed this prosecution, to put a stop to this scandalous and wicked practice of defaming His Majesty's government."

Oho, said Hamilton, his voice tinged with irony and mock surprise; I had no idea, until the attorney general pointed it out, that the *governor* was the butt of Zenger's supposedly libelous articles, and I had thought Bradley had brought this prosecution on his own initiative, obsequiously "to show his superiors the great concern he had lest they should be treated with any undue freedom." But now that he tells us that "this prosecution was directed by the Governor and Council," and now that I look around and see the huge audience in this courtroom, "I have reason to think . . . that the people believe they have a good deal more at stake, than I apprehended."

Surely, Hamilton continued, even Bradley must think the truth or falsehood of Zenger's articles is a critical question in this case, whatever the law says. After all, he charged the printer in his "information" with "publishing *a certain false, malicious, seditious and scandalous libel*. This word *false* must have some meaning, else how came it there? . . . The falsehood makes the scandal, and both make the libel," he contended. "Mr. Attorney has now only to prove the words *false* in order to make us guilty."

Hold on, interjected the chief justice, backing up Bradley's quite correct reading of the law. "You cannot be admitted, Mr. Hamilton, to give the truth of a libel in evidence. A libel is not to be justified; for it is nevertheless a libel that it is *true*."

Hamilton begged to differ—at considerable length.

"Mr. Hamilton, the Court have delivered their opinion, and we expect you will use us with good manners," De Lancey concluded. "You are not to be permitted to argue against the opinion of the Court."

hen, gentlemen of the jury, it is to you we must now appeal," said Hamilton, turning toward them. "You are citizens of New York; you are really what the law supposes you to be, *honest and lawful men*. . . . In your justice lies our safety."

Easy there, De Lancey interposed: the only question for the jury is whether Zenger published the papers. According to the law, they must leave it to the Court to decide if they are libelous.

"The jury may do so; but I do likewise know they may do otherwise," Hamilton countered. "I know they have the right beyond all dispute to determine both the law and the fact, and where they do not doubt of the law, they ought to do so. This of leaving it to the judgment of the Court *whether the words are libelous or not* in effect renders juries useless"—as had already happened when Bradley charged Zenger despite three grand juries' refusal to indict him. And here Hamilton effectively snatched the trial out of the hands of the judges and the prosecutor and transformed it from a question of law into a question of politics. The issue became, as a contemporary observer remarked, not what the law was, but what "ought to be law, and will always be law wherever justice prevails."

Echoing the language and political philosophy of *Cato's Letters*, Hamilton told the jurors that "all freemen . . . are entitled to complain when they are hurt; they have a right publicly to remonstrate the abuses of power in the strongest terms, to put their neighbors upon their guard against the craft or open violence of men in authority, and to assert with courage the sense they have of the blessings of liberty, . . . and their resolution at all hazards to preserve it as one of the greatest blessings heaven can bestow." The only restraint the law can put "upon this natural right . . . can only extend to what is *false*." Otherwise, "were this to be denied, then the next step may make them slaves; For what notions can be entertained of slavery beyond that of suffering the greatest injuries and oppressions without the liberty of complaining; or if they do, to be destroyed, body and estate, for so doing?"

As for the libel laws curtailing free speech, almost all the precedents that the attorney general cites come from the tyrannical reigns of the Stuarts. They are mostly Star Chamber cases, that nonjury court where "the most arbitrary and

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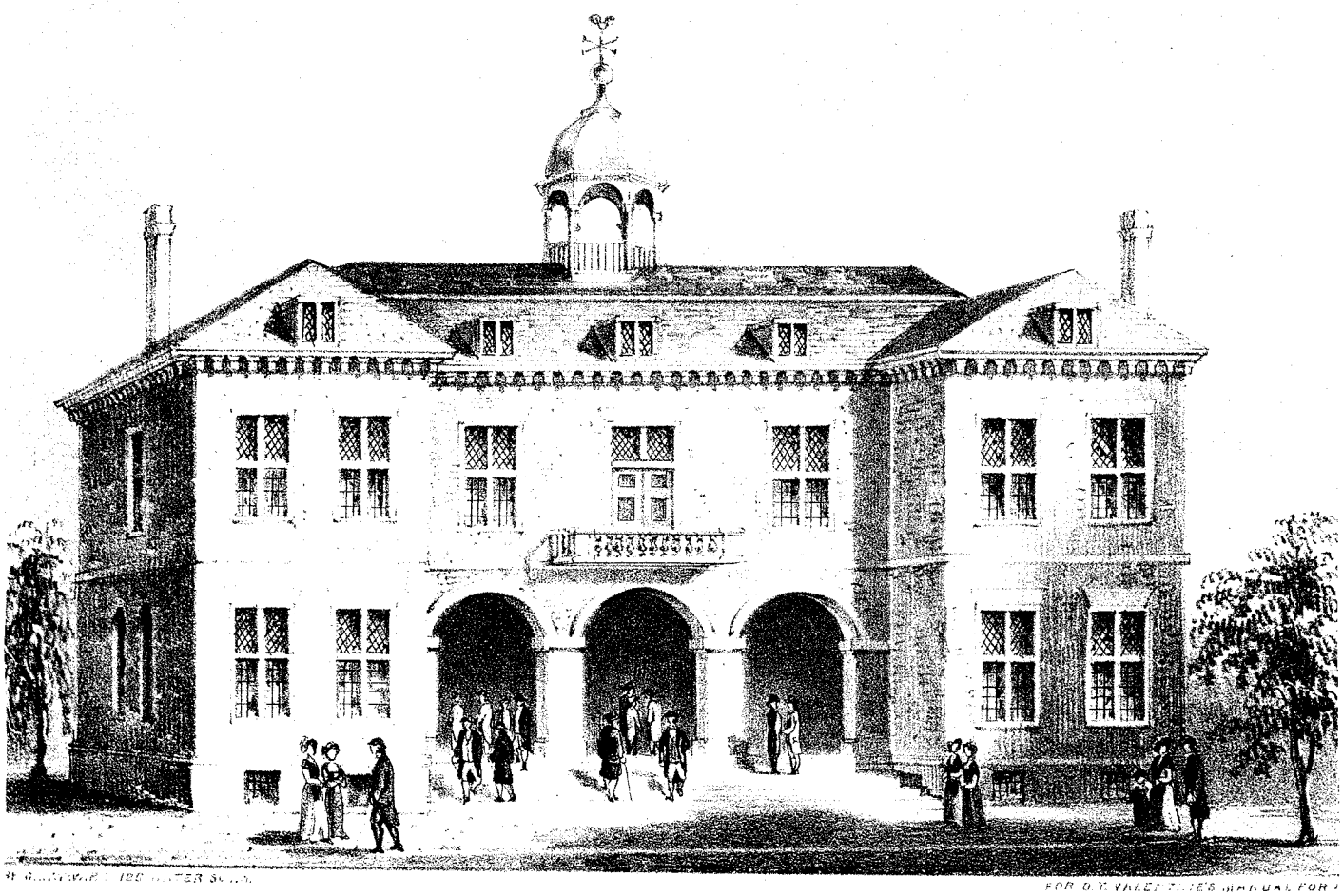

OLD CITY HALL, WALL STREET 1776.
Drawn by David Grim

New York's old City Hall, a sacred shrine of American liberty

destructive judgments and opinions were given that ever an Englishman heard of." There, prosecutions were "set on foot at the instance of the Crown or its ministers" and—to take a swipe at De Lancey as well as Cosby—"too much countenanced by the judges, who held their places at pleasure (a disagreeable tenure to any officer, but a dangerous one in the case of a judge)."

In those Star Chamber days, "great men" accused people by an "information," and "the people of England were cheated or awed into delivering up their ancient and sacred right of trials by grand and petit juries."

No wonder the Glorious Revolution of 1688 did away with such a tyrannical court: "The people of England saw clearly the danger of trusting their liberties and properties to be tried, even by the greatest men in the kingdom, without the judgment of a jury of their equals. They had felt the terrible effects of leaving it to the judgment of these great men to say what was *scandalous or seditious, false or ironical*." We should let the Star Chamber and its cases stay dead: "In the reign of an arbitrary prince, where judges held their seats at pleasure, their judgments

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have not always been such as to make precedents of, but to the contrary."

Free speech and trial by a jury of one's peers: the whole case really is about these two great guardians of liberty, Hamilton put it to his 12 jurors, focusing the spotlight of history squarely upon them and asking them to play their part in a momentous constitutional drama. "Power may justly be compared to a great river, while kept within its due bounds, is both beautiful and useful; but when it overflows its banks," he told them, it "brings destruction and desolation wherever it comes." It needs checks and balances to restrain its inevitable tendency to excess—checks like the dozen men before him. "Let us at least do our duty," Hamilton urged them, and "use our utmost care to support liberty, the only bulwark against lawless power."

Lawless power precipitated this affair. Just as in the worst days of the Stuart era, we are seeing "prosecutions upon informations set on foot by the government to deprive a people of the right of remonstrating (and complaining too) of the arbitrary attempts of men in power," Hamilton charged. "Men who injure and oppress the people under their administration provoke them to cry out and complain; and then make that very complaint the foundation for new oppressions and prosecutions."

But under the British constitution, a jury can stymie such lawless administrators by refusing to ratify their unjust schemes—despite what the presiding judge may say, as Hamilton had asserted at the start of his argument. "The question before the Court and you gentlemen of the jury is not of small nor private concern, it is not the cause of a poor printer, nor of New York alone," Hamilton summed up. "It is the cause of liberty; and I make no doubt but your upright conduct this day will not only entitle you to the love and esteem of your fellow citizens; but every man who prefers freedom to a life of slavery will bless and honor you as men who have baffled the attempt of tyranny; and by an impartial and uncorrupt verdict, have laid a noble foundation for securing to ourselves and our posterity, and our neighbors that to which nature and the laws of our country have given us a right—the liberty—both of exposing and opposing arbitrary power . . . by speaking and writing truth."

The jury, after "a small time" of deliberation, came back with a verdict of not guilty, sparking three cheers from the spectators. The next day, Zenger was a free man, and the mayor and aldermen of New York gave Hamilton the freedom of the city and a gold box, engraved "Won not by money but virtue," for his "learned and generous defense of the rights of mankind, and the liberty of the press."

This defiant act of jury nullification didn't change the law, of course. Even after the Bill of Rights became part of the U.S. Constitution, the government brought libel cases under John Adams's shameful 1798 Sedition Act, which, however, finally made truth a lawful defense in federal cases; and later still, Jeffersonian Republicans brought such actions under state law, until a brilliant argument by Alexander Hamilton (no relation to Andrew) in an 1804 New York Supreme Court appeal prompted the state the next year to redefine libel as a false, malicious, and defamatory statement, with other states following suit.

But after 1735, British officials knew that American juries were unlikely to convict in libel cases, so such prosecutions became rare once the newspapers and James Alexander's widely read *Brief Narrative* spread the tale of the Zenger verdict all across the colonies. These reports helped mold the political culture of British America, and, of course, the verdict opened the floodgates on a torrent of political pamphleteering that heightened the colonists' reverence for liberty, constitutional rights, freedom of speech and of the press, and trial by jury. So when in 1772, British authorities seemed ready to carry out their threats to try American customs evaders in nonjury admiralty courts, Virginians formed the first revolutionary committee of correspondence and set the colonists on a course from which they never turned back.

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In Search of the Washington Novel

Christopher Hitchens

A colorful genre awaits its masterpiece.

fiction about the nation's capital is a growth that flourishes only on the lower slopes of Parnassus. Think of the flower of our novelists—Updike, Mailer, Roth, Cheever, Bellow—and see if you can call to mind a single scene that is set on the banks of the Potomac. Mailer did a famous nonfiction account of the march on the Pentagon (*The Armies of the Night*), and Updike briefly created a lifelike President Buchanan, but that second exception proves a more general rule, exemplified by Gore Vidal's canon: historical reconstruction is the form in which our novelists prefer to approach the matter.

Can one imagine a Dickens without London or a Zola or Flaubert without Paris? The *radix malorum* can probably be found in the famous bargain between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton, made when New York was still the capital of these United States. In exchange for an agreement to build the constitutionally mandated new Federal City on the border of Jefferson's beloved Virginia, Hamilton could have his coveted national bank. Thus, and allowing for certain Philadelphian interludes, it was decided early on that the cultural capital of America would be separated from its political one. Other countries that have made similar two-headed arrangements include Australia, Brazil, Burma, and Canada: we yet await the Brasilia or Canberra novel.

I'm among the few who consider Mailer's *Harlot's Ghost* a triumph, but to the extent that it is a novel of Washington rather than of the Cold War, it's part of a formula on which too many authors have relied: the political thriller. As Thomas Mallon, one of the city's few resident literary novelists, once put it:

> Washington novels, such as they are, tend to be found on racks at National Airport, the raised gold letters of their titles promising a bomb on Air Force One or a terrorist kidnapping of the First Lady. There's a reason for all the goofiness. A serious novelist must take his characters seriously, regard them as three-dimensional creatures with inner lives and authentic moral crises; and that's just what, out of a certain democratic pride, Americans refuse to do with their politicians.

emocratic pride": the original of the Washington novel is Henry Adams's *Democracy*, published in 1880 with its very title a sneer at the illusion of popular sovereignty. (It also founded the tradition that culminates with Joe Klein and *Primary Colors*: Adams published his book anonymously, hoping that readers would attribute it to his friend John Hay. Joan Didion borrowed the title, if not the practice, in her antipolitical novel of the same name, published in 1984.)

Probably without wishing to do so, Adams provided a template for later authors to use as their glass of fashion and mold of form. Essential *dramatis personae* include a president, a society hostess, a British ambassador, a lobbyist or journalist, and a senator—the last customarily outfitted with a "mane." This mixture is repeated almost pedantically as late as Allen Drury's classic *Advise and Consent*, published in 1959. I suspect that it was only with the assassination of President Kennedy that the stately Potomac-paced *roman-fleuve* began to give way to the imperatives of the anything-goes thriller and to the mounting demand for Washington stories that could easily make the transition to the big screen. I speak as one whose D.C. apartment, with its view of the presidential motorcade, was used by Clint Eastwood as the location of his character's hideout in the movie version of David Baldacci's novel *Absolute Power*. And do I not remember sneering in print at the close of one of Tom Clancy's ill-carpentered Jack Ryan hack jobs, which ended with a

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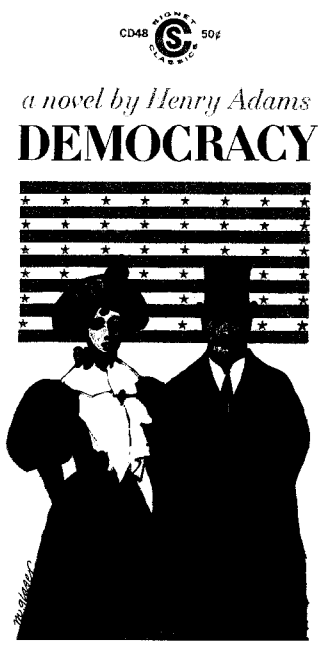
plane crashing into the Capitol dome during a joint session? Currently, a special bipartisan committee is working on recommendations for what to do if that ever *does* happen, as it so nearly did in 2001. That body's deliberations on the constitutional implications of such an event could form the basis for a fine novella.

But Washington, so dull to outward appearances, does have a way of outpacing the imagination of pulp writers. John F. Kennedy smuggling the Mob's molls into the White House bedroom? Nixon and Kissinger praying on the Oval Office rug? Nixon and Chuck Colson discussing a possible bombing of the Brookings Institution? Oliver North running a parallel state and a private treasury from the White House basement? Ronald Reagan musing on the biblical end times with the head of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee? Bill Clinton's furtive cigar with Monica Lewinsky, tagged and bagged by the FBI on the grounds—this actually is in a footnote of the Starr Report—that smoking materials were forbidden in the executive mansion?

Fiction somehow declines the responsibility of creating a realistic Washington in favor of various genre approaches. Of the comic one, always so tempting, my friend Christopher Buckley is the acknowledged maestro, feasting on the buffet provided by lobbyists and Hill rats and those unhinged by ambition. (I pause to acknowledge his underrated and *noir*-ish earlier novel, *Wet Work*.) Of the politico-ideological and also of the Potomosexual genre, I would nominate Mallon as the leader. How come that's two literary guys with backgrounds as conservative Catholic Republicans? Search me. Mallon's most recent novel, *Fellow Travelers*, is a splendid evocation of Washington in the McCarthy era, with two kinds of victims as the atmosphere thickens: the covert Communists and the closet gays (a faction with a foot more in the camp of the persecuting than in that of the persecuted). It also has what few District fictions possess: a sharp working knowledge of the city's neighborhoods, from northeast Capitol Hill to Foggy Bottom and the Penn Quarter. (George Pelecanos, in his novels about the city in the time before the 1968 race riots, has the same level of shoe-leather skills.)



But here again, we are on the relatively secure turf of the known past. In this dimension, Gore Vidal has no rival. I once heard Newt Gingrich rebuke someone who was bad-mouthing Vidal's politics, insisting that he wished to hear no ill of the author of the magnificent *Lincoln*. This work is indeed enormously praiseworthy, as is the larger sequence of which it forms a part. In *Burr*, for example, Vidal guessed the truth about Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings long before most historians grudgingly conceded the point. However, Vidal's narrative—like the rest of his career—declines as it reaches its end: the last novel of the cycle, *The Golden Age*, gave as free a rein to paranoia about FDR's supposed foreknowledge of Pearl Harbor as the old boy's public pronouncements did to the drivel about 9/11 "truth."

Here is what Mrs. Lightfoot Lee, the inquisitive widow of Adams's tale, thinks about moving to a town where she will dwell "among the illiterate swarm of ordinary people who . . . represented constituencies so dreary that in comparison New York was a New Jerusalem, and Broad Street a grove of academe." Perhaps there will be compensations for this exile to the provinces:

> What she wished to see, she thought, was the clash of interests, the

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> interests of forty millions of people and a whole continent, centering at Washington; guided, restrained, controlled, or unrestrained and uncontrollable, by men of ordinary mould; the tremendous forces of government, and the machinery of society, at work. What she wanted, was POWER.

Of course, that's not exactly what she gets, what with the enervating climate and the pervasive atmosphere of corruption and cynicism. She has to be content with some unsought attentions from a too-powerful senator (the name of this odious charmer is Clinton, as it happens; there is also a character named Gore). No, the fact is that Washington is and always has been irretrievably bogged down in *process*. And process doesn't generally make for electrifying prose—unless you're a fan of the novels of C. P. Snow, which describe the intestinal workings of inner-sanctum power struggles conducted by micro-megalomaniacs.

This brings us to Ward Just, possibly chief among those who have depicted the nation's capital as the bureaucratic and constipated place that it in fact is. Perhaps by way of offsetting the innate or latent tedium of this enterprise, Just—a former reporter for the *Washington Post* and *Newsweek*, who, like Allen Drury, pulled off the journalist's dream of publishing his bottom-drawer fiction—has a flair for the arresting title. He called one of his books *Honor, Power, Riches, Fame, and the Love of Women*, which certainly outpaces *Democracy* as an eye-catching title on a bookstall, as well as outbidding it as a definition of what most of our politicians actually work for. One of his short stories—"The Congressman Who Loved Flaubert"—is my selection for the most improbable title ever evolved on the banks of the Potomac.

Like Vidal, Just anchors his narratives in history, but unlike Vidal, he often brings them into our own day. In *Echo House*, he describes three generations of a political family named Behl. Somewhat didactic, the book is full of reminders that politics is not for the idealistic and is increasingly dominated by the media-savvy and the telegenic. (For some reason, we make this simple discovery anew every decade or so.) After an early disappointment connected with his failure to secure a vice-presidential nomination, the senior Behl hands his son a signed first edition—of Adams's *Democracy*.

t must say something that the Adams mold is so hard to break. The days of the Georgetown hostess are gone; the hostesses themselves are gone, too. Their reign began to close years ago, when senators started canceling dinners to appear on shows like *Nightline*. (There's a prefiguration of this in Larry McMurtry's neglected 1982 Washington novel *Cadillac Jack*, in which a character pontificates on world-shaking matters of which he knows little.) The Washington pundit is also a thing of the past: it's been a good while since any insider columnist had the kind of access or influence that Ben Bradlee enjoyed with John F. Kennedy. And the British Embassy, while it still stages some of the best dinners, is not the brokerage of influence that it once was. Yet—if we except the intermittent efforts at describing catastrophe or conspiracy, themselves mostly falling short of observable reality—this is the sort of stereotype in which the model remains confined.

Mrs. Lightfoot Lee can say a bit more for herself than her creator, who stressed that consuming interest in POWER. She has a reflective capacity also:

> "Who, then, is right? How *can* we all be right? Half of our wise men declare that the world is going straight to perdition; the other half that it is fast becoming perfect. Both cannot be right. There is only one thing in life," she went on, laughing, "that I must and will have before I die. I must know whether America is right or wrong."

It is that question, and no matter of process or advice or consent, that transcends all the others. We still await the novelist who can address the matter of the last, best hope of earth and treat it without frivolity, without cynicism, and without embarrassment.

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City Lights

Stefan Kanfer

New York's long literary line

For writers, New York City has always been a magnet with two poles, one that attracts, another that repels. Visiting from England, Anthony Trollope was drawn to the place; he thought it "intensely American." Alexis de Tocqueville, on the other hand, found the city "bizarre and disagreeable." Decades later, Henry James seconded that assessment: "New York is appalling, fantastically charmless and elaborately dire." Decades after that, F. Scott Fitzgerald romantically disagreed: "The city seen for the first time" had the "wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty in the world." No other urban area, not even London or Paris, has provoked such strong opinions or inspired so many novels, short stories, and nonfiction narratives.

Washington Irving started the flood. He was the first professional author to make New York (or Gotham, as he dubbed it) his centerpiece. Elsewhere, he's best remembered for countryside legends like Rip Van Winkle. But in New York, his pseudonym has even greater staying power: his satirical history of New York under Dutch rule was written by one Dietrich Knickerbocker. The Knicks of the NBA salute Irving every time they take to the boards.

Irving died in 1859 at 76, his reputation beginning to wane. A new generation was knocking at the door, and it had little use for old-fashioned prose and tame ghost stories. The rivalry began. Edgar Allan Poe, the master of horror, lived for a time in a Bronx cottage. There he issued the opinion that Irving was "much overrated." Poe, American to his fingertips but adored by the French, elbowed his way to literary prominence in the late 1830s. Yet he died of alcoholism before he could consolidate his reputation and put down rivals.

By then, however, plenty of other writers were making their way in New York. Long before Walt Whitman reinvented American poetry, he was a newspaper reporter who reviewed his own books anonymously and praised the city in extravagant prose: "There is no place like it, no place with an atom of its glory, pride, and exultancy. It lays its hand upon a man's bowels; he grows drunk with ecstasy; he grows young and full of glory, he feels he can never die."

James Fenimore Cooper moved from his Scarsdale farm

BETTMANN/CORBIS

The Algonquin Hotel: a famous Gotham hangout for writers, such as Dorothy Parker and James Thurber (far right)

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to downtown Manhattan in the 1820s. Setting up on Pearl Street, he produced a series of popular works, ranging from sea novels to frontier epics. Books like *The Last of the Mohicans* enjoyed worldwide success, and for years Cooper considered himself beyond the critics' reproach. Then came another city dweller, Samuel Clemens, who would live for a time in Washington Square. In his essay "James Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses," Clemens (writing, as usual, under the name Mark Twain) noted that Cooper used—and misused—a very small "box of stage properties." A favorite one was "to make a moccasined person tread in the tracks of the moccasined enemy, and thus hide his own trail. Cooper wore out barrels and barrels of moccasins in working that trick." Another favorite was the "dry twig" routine: "Every time a Cooper person is in peril, and absolute silence is worth four dollars a minute, he is sure to step on a dry twig. . . . The *Leatherstocking Series* ought to have been called the *Broken Twig Series*." Choose any Cooper work, Twain concluded, and "its pathos is funny; its conversations are—oh! indescribable; its love-scenes odious; its English a crime against the language. Counting these out, what is left is Art. I think we must all admit that."

While he was at it, Twain derided a former resident of Washington Square who had left Greenwich Village for the more hospitable precincts of London. "Once you put it down," Twain is said to have grumped about a novel by Henry James, "you simply can't pick it up." James was too lofty to argue; he bided his time, and then remarked that Twain was all right in his way but that his writings appealed "to rudimentary minds."

Those rudimentary minds also found much to admire in two city dwellers who told stories based on what they had seen and heard. Stephen Crane, who wrote *The Red Badge of Courage* at 24 without ever witnessing war, considered the Bowery "the only interesting street in New York." And William Sydney Porter, who wrote as O. Henry, found all the inspiration he needed by looking at faces in the Manhattan crowds. "In the Big City," he observed, "large and sudden things happen. . . . The City is a sprightly youngster, and you are red paint upon its toy."

But the elegant James had little use for these authors—imagine writing about prostitutes and slum dwellers! Though born in Manhattan, the master of nuance had spent decades away from the city before returning for a visit in 1906. He was appalled. A trip to the Lower East Side, crowded with Jewish immigrants fleeing the pogroms of Czarist Russia, proved particularly dismaying. "There is no swarming like that of Israel when once Israel has got a start," wrote James, "and the scene here bristled, at every step, with the signs and sounds, immitigable, unmistakable, of a Jewry that had burst all bounds." After visiting a tearoom where he heard a nerve-jangling mix of American and Yiddish phrases, the author made a prediction: "The Hebrew conquest of New York" would bite the national tongue. "Whatever we shall know it for, certainly, we shall not know it for English."

Like fellow novelist Edith Wharton, who also lamented this proletarian takeover of downtown New York, James missed the significance of what he witnessed. The city was being revitalized. True, the Lower East Side was more crowded than Calcutta, but the newcomers had brought with them a fresh energy and a limitless ambition. They were already creating a dramatic literature of their own; more than two dozen Yiddish theaters featured operas and straight plays—in addition to revivals of Chekhov, Shakespeare, and Tolstoy. Brilliant writers eventually emerged from this ghetto, including composer and lyricist Irving Berlin, drama critic and director Harold Clurman, and Nobel laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer.

By the 1920s, New York was playing host to a different kind of literature. Journalism was in the saddle and rode the publishing industry. *Time* debuted in 1923; its feverish, jaunty prose quickly caught the spirit of the Aspirin Age. *The New Yorker* came along two years later. Under editor Harold Ross, it became the most important literary journal in America, attracting writers as disparate as Edmund Wilson and Groucho Marx. The magazine's strength

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and weakness derived from the same source: its insularity. Some staffers and contributors formed a luncheon group called the Algonquin Round Table. It met every day at a hotel on 44th Street, where ad-libs, puns, and light verses were carefully crafted and then sent to cooperative newspaper columnists. Dorothy Parker: "I like to have a martini, / Two at the very most. / After three I'm under the table. / After four I'm under the host." Robert Benchley: "A freelance writer is a man who is paid per piece or per word or perhaps." George S. Kaufman on flying: "I like terra firma. The more firma, the less terra."

It was all very bright and witty—until the Depression took hold and gave that sort of chatter an irrelevance, even in a place famous for an ability to droll with the punches. Ernest Hemingway found the literary city repulsive; in *Green Hills of Africa*, he called New York writers "angleworms in a bottle." And H. L. Mencken demanded, "Have you ever noticed that no American writer of any consequence lives in Manhattan? Dreiser tried it (after many years in the Bronx), but finally fled to California."

Mencken, notorious for his contrarian screeds, was wrong. So was Hemingway. In addition to Singer, five recipients of the Nobel Prize for Literature have found New York's attractions too powerful to resist: Sinclair Lewis, Eugene O'Neill, John Steinbeck, Saul Bellow, and Toni Morrison. Philip Roth and John Updike took apartments there; Norman Mailer never left town. Along the way, *The New Yorker* stopped being quite so closed and began to publish the likes of J. D. Salinger, Ursula K. Le Guin, Alice Munro, and Vladimir Nabokov.

n their slipstream has come an impressive chorus of writers who regard the city as a font of inspiration. Tom Wolfe's 1987 Bronx- and Manhattan-based novel *The Bonfire of the Vanities* was not only coruscating but prescient; his fictive Reverend Bacon anticipated Al Sharpton's emergence as a major public figure. Wolfe has since gone on to analyze the city's cultural scene with acuity and wit. Jonathan Franzen, currently the hottest novelist in America (*Freedom*, *The Corrections*) lives on the Upper East Side and spends his off-hours bird-watching in Central Park. In a literal sense, New York is not the subject of his novels. Yet in a literary sense, it is: the city's power, variety, and endurance inform his characters and plots. In the brilliant *Lush Life*, Richard Price covers the skirmishes between residents of the Lower East Side and the yuppies who, while pushing them out, don't mind scoring a few drugs from the nonwhite guys who still have pads on Eldridge and Orchard Streets (the very thoroughfares that offended Henry James). In *Chronic City*, Brooklyn-born Jonathan Lethem creates a Manhattan in which a ferocious tiger destroys subway stations, a thick, mysterious fog covers downtown, and a billionaire mayor (perhaps the most absurd invention of all) dithers in the background.

Michael Chabon sets his fanciful and *Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* during the golden age of comic books. The pop artists flourish in a Manhattan much like the Metropolis of Clark Kent and Lois Lane. Caleb Carr places the cast of *The Alienist* (including Teddy Roosevelt and J. P. Morgan) in nineteenth-century New York, but the narrative overflows with contemporary Freudian and political insights. Carr's most striking note comes not from his febrile imagination but from the pages of history: he describes the old reservoir, on Fifth Avenue in the lower 40s, that once sent water to all the boroughs. In 1911, it became the site of the New York Public Library, the acreage next to Bryant Park switching from slaking New Yorkers' physical thirsts to satisfying their intellectual appetites. A century later, it's still doing so.

Small wonder, then, that so many authors regard the city as the most beguiling and inspiring place on the planet. In *Here Is New York*, first published in 1949, E. B. White imagines "a boy arriving from the Corn Belt with a manuscript in his suitcase and a pain in his heart" embracing New York with the shiny eyes of an adventurer, generating enough illumination "to dwarf the Consolidated Edison Company." Even then, that boy was a latecomer. The long line of adventurers with manuscripts began in Washington Irving's time, and it has never stopped. As long as they keep coming, Gotham will never lack light.

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Oh, to

England

The Vandals in Retreat

Theodore Dalrymple

Britain rediscovers its architectural heritage.

During my childhood, we still had pea-soup fogs in London, so thick that you couldn't see your hand when you held it more than a few inches from your face. The fogs were exclusive to November, so that I imagined that they were simply features of the climate, like snow in winter. I longed for them to come. They were exciting, these fogs. They were just as described at the beginning of *Bleak House*: "Fog everywhere. . . . Gas looming through the fog in divers places in the streets. . . . Most of the shops lighted two hours before their time—as the gas seems to know, for it has a haggard and unwilling look."

Of course, it wasn't gaslight that loomed through the fogs of my childhood, but electric light. The shape of a double-decker bus would slowly transform from the merest blur into something more definite only a few feet away, its headlights like the malign yellow eyes of some devouring beast. Before the bus, a man would walk, guiding the driver through a gloom far more impenetrable than the darkest night. The fog was not merely an absence of light; it was the opponent and scatterer of light, locked in mortal battle with it and almost triumphing. The fogs killed thousands, mainly old people with lungs weakened from decades of smoking. I didn't know this at the time, and I don't suppose it would have worried me much if I had known it. Childhood is not an age of enlarged views and philanthropic feeling.

The decline of smokestack industries, the abandonment of domestic coal fires, and the passing of a Clean Air Act soon made the fogs as remote in memory as manual typewriters are now. Within less than a decade, they came to be associated more with the London of Sherlock Holmes than with the city of a few years before. No child would again experience the excitement that I had felt because of them.

But this was genuine progress. The fogs were a manifestation of the pollution that did terrible damage not only to people's lungs but to the buildings of the past, and therefore to something more intangible: people's view of the past. Soot and grime covered almost every building in every British city; one looked at a building and thought, "How grim." The country was like a vast Victorian funeral. This was one reason, no doubt, that Britain then undertook an orgy of urban destruction unparalleled in peacetime. The Luftwaffe had been bungling amateurs, it turned out, compared with the town and city fathers of Britain. The Germans managed to destroy a few cities—though none utterly beyond repair, if a will to repair had existed—but the local authorities ruined practically everything, with a thoroughness that would have been admirable in a good cause.

When they looked at a grimy building, the authorities, armed with new legal powers to plan and reconstruct towns and cities, saw only the grime and not the magnificence beneath. The authorities were not, on the whole, imaginative men, except when it came to imagining the fortunes that one could make from demolition and redevelopment. Advising them were architects and engineers who had converted *en masse* to modernism and who, even before the destruction brought by the war (which many of them welcomed), were groping toward Gropius. They agreed with Gropius's view that "a breach has been made with the past, which allows us to envisage a new aspect of architecture corresponding to the technical civilization of the age we live in; the morphology of dead styles has been destroyed; and we are returning to honesty of thought and feeling." On this understanding, any thought of preservation, of harmonizing the new with the old, let alone of new building in old styles, was a perversion.

The grime had become the sign of a past now hated with a lack of moral discrimination

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Manchester's long-neglected canals have become valued assets.

comparable to that once displayed by the jingoists, who had assumed that all was for the best in this, the best of all possible islands. Postwar Britain was a defeated power in everything but the military sense; its old industries, which had caused the grime, could not return it to prosperity; much better, then, to pull everything down and start again. The grime symbolized Gradgrind and Bounderby, and nothing else.

That the Soviet Union emerged triumphant from World War II would also prove a catastrophe for the British urban environment, for it supposedly showed the superiority of central planning over its absence. Intellectuals viewed British towns and cities as the antithesis of planning: like

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Topsy, they just growed. It didn't occur to the intellectuals that these were places where successive generations, over many centuries, had produced an urban environment that had charm and was intensely social and livable, largely because those who built it had to live in what they built; or that where planning had taken place—in Bath, for example, or in the New Town section of Edinburgh—it was carried out by men of the highest possible caliber, for a population of refined and elegant taste. In fact, refinement and elegance were now ideologically suspect. As George Orwell pointed out before the war, our civilization (at least as it then was) ultimately rested on coal mining, a horrible industry that maimed people, blighted lives, and blotted landscapes. To live in elegance in such a society was like living in peace with an art collection stolen from Jewish families during the war.

Thus the towns and cities of Britain needed a new moral and physical beginning. And as rational men, the planners knew what people needed: roads and parking lots, so that they might conveniently get to and make use of their shopping and cultural centers. Many medieval lanes, and entire Georgian streets, were destroyed in the name of driving and parking—the appetite for which seemed only to grow with the feeding, and now less than ever has been met.

The planners and city fathers saw attachment to the city of the past as politically sinister. In 1947, the Labour-led city council of Bristol, which had been severely bombed during the war, laid plans to redevelop the city rather than restore it. When the local shopkeepers' association polled 13,000 people to see whether they liked the council's plans, and only 400 answered affirmatively, the council denounced the poll: "The so-called poll is without any official sanction and can carry no weight. The slipshod, inefficient and utterly un-democratic methods by which it is being conducted are reminiscent of Hitler's early efforts in political demagoguery."

Of course, the poll likely was not scientific, according to the canons of academic political research; but the results were surely startling enough to merit serious consideration by the city council. The notion that one could disregard the poll because it lacked "official sanction" offers insight into where the councillors believed both power and wisdom properly lay: with themselves. The reference to Hitler was peculiar, for it suggested that the preservation of buildings was somehow a harbinger of Nazi revolution. It was ironic as well, for the councillors failed to see that their own desire to organize the old, higgledy-piggledy city into a "rational" plan that fulfilled an ideological ideal was very much like the Nazis' radical architectural ambitions for German towns and cities.

But throughout Britain, many city engineers and architects proved only too willing to engage in that project. For instance, it was the hope of Sir Herbert Manzoni, the city engineer of Birmingham, to pull down every non-modernist building in the city center. Luckily, he died in 1963 before achieving his ambition, but he got quite far, and his spirit sputtered on after him, with the magnificent Victorian library of 1866 pulled down in 1974 and replaced with an inverted concrete ziggurat of such ugliness and (now) dilapidation that it defies description, at least by me. Its environs serve now as a giant *pissoir* and, at night, as a safe haven for drunks and rapists; and thus the Albert Speers of Britain have converted the Victorian dream of municipal munificence into the nightmare of administered anomie.

I find it difficult to write temperately on this subject. I have only to see an example of the mass desecration of Britain's architectural heritage to start trembling with rage. No town or city in Britain has inherited so little in the way of beauty that officials did not think it worth destroying. Recently in Rotherham, a steel town near Sheffield, I saw the historic environs of a magnificent fifteenth-century church falling into ruins, while all around there was a concrete mess, aesthetically worthy of being the administrative capital of an autonomous region of Soviet Central Asia at the height, or the depth, of the Brezhnev era.

My wife tells me to calm down; as she rightly notes, I can

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do nothing about this disaster now. But it is not merely the physical ugliness of what has been done that affects me; it is the ugliness of soul that was necessary for it to be done. The men entrusted with planning and rebuilding Britain's towns and cities, one cannot help but think, must have suffered from a deep sense of humiliation, an awareness that, in an age of the most startling technical progress, they were not equal to the most jobbing of jobbing provincial builders of two and a half centuries earlier. Destruction of the heritage was all that was open to them, then, and in this, at least, they excelled. They were like Satan, who, expelled from heaven, exclaimed:

> Me miserable! which way
> shall I fly
> Infinite wrath, and infinite
> despair?
> Which way I fly is Hell;
> myself am Hell.

They certainly produced a visual hell, all the more hellish because they allowed elements of what existed before to remain, so that the contrast was inescapable. In what was once the beautiful small city of Worcester, to take one more example, part of the graceful complex of ecclesiastical buildings next to the cathedral was destroyed in order to erect the Giffard Hotel, a concrete building in the style of Le Corbusier that would have gladdened the hearts of Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu. The hotel now vies with the cathedral for one's visual attention: it is impossible to screen it out.

et matters have improved greatly in the last few years. Acts of official vandalism are rarer, and when attempted cause a public outcry. Citizens have formed groups to protect what remains of their heritage and no longer stand by watching the destruction of whole townscapes. Old buildings are routinely adapted to new purposes (as civilized people have known how to do for centuries) instead of being treated as impediments to progress or to traffic. Victorian buildings are cleaned up instead of demolished, and the architectural detail beneath the grime has come as a revelation to many who previously might have held the Victorians in contempt. London's remaining Victorian railway stations have been modernized, keeping their basic features, so that the elegance and beauty of the ironwork is obvious to all. St. Pancras station, a masterpiece of Victorian Gothic architecture, has been lovingly (and, admittedly, expensively) restored and made the terminus of the train to Paris. Fittingly, the concourse has a statue of the poet Sir John Betjeman, whose protests helped save the station from demolition and replacement—perhaps by something as ugly as the new Euston station, a few hundred yards up the road, which took the place of the magnificently neoclassical original Euston station. The open space around Euston, probably not coincidentally, is as dirty as anywhere in London: people vote with their litter.

Not only has the official vandalism been much reduced; architecture and urbanization have considerably improved. Cities such as Birmingham, Leeds, and Manchester have undergone something of a revival, though it is too late to save the parts of them destroyed in the frenzy of self-hatred, utopianism, social engineering, and financial corruption that I have described.

Among other discoveries made by the town planners, architects, and general public is that cities with central residential districts are better places to live than those that relegate all domiciles to the outer fringes and leave the centers as ghost towns every evening. Birmingham and Manchester have also belatedly discovered an unsuspected asset that the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries bequeathed: they have more canals than Venice. Before the advent of railways, the portage of goods in industrial Britain was largely by canal, and Birmingham and Manchester were at the center of canal networks. The canals were beautifully constructed, but they were then left derelict for more than a century and became ditches where thistles grew and rubbish was dumped. The brick or iron bridges that span them are, despite the utilitarianism of their construction, of a surprising and moving elegance. The early industrialists were not quite as impervious to aesthetic considerations as Gradgrind and Bounderby might have led one to suppose.

These canals crisscrossed the cities' hearts. As if by some operation of the zeitgeist, houses and flats began to rise in large

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numbers along the canals during the 1990s, and, in some cases, they were elegant places in which someone with an aesthetic sense might actually like to live. The raw concrete that during the worst years of destruction became a kind of phallic symbol for British architects was nowhere to be seen; walls were made of brick, or at least received a brick veneer. Many details could have been done better, doubtless, but one's first impression was not horror.

The repeopling of city centers, largely with the young and educated middle class, brought other advantages. For many, cultural activities were now within easy reach—indeed, walking distance—rather than a tedious ride away. Such cultural amenities as already existed (and Birmingham and Manchester always had good orchestras) expanded, and new ones arrived. It astonishes me how well one can now eat in these cities, given their long, dismal record of bad food. In other words, the civilized pleasures and advantages of living in a city began to make themselves felt.

But to this I must now enter several caveats. The first is that much of the building, though more attractive than anything erected for many years, is not of high quality. With few exceptions, no contemporary British architect believes that he builds *sub specie aeternitatis*; on the contrary, he expects what he constructs to be pulled down soon and replaced. That a building should be sound enough to last perhaps 30 years is the city council's main demand, which is conducive neither to solidity nor to fine workmanship. This explains why builders have used methods and materials that look well enough when new but will soon look tawdry.

The second caveat is that far more houses and flats were built than demand could absorb. This didn't seem to matter much while prices were rising: a house by a canal, bought new in Birmingham for $300,000, was, within a few years, worth upward of $1 million. But, as we have since seen, the whole British economy was like Ophelia after she had fallen into the brook:

> Her clothes spread wide,
> And mermaid-like a while
> they bore her up;
> Which time she chanted
> snatches of old tunes,
> As one incapable of her
> own distress,
> Or like a creature native
> and endued
> Unto that element; but long
> it could not be
> Till that her garments,
> heavy with their drink,
> Pulled the poor wretch
> from her melodious lay
> To muddy death.

This is the fate, it seems, of economies that base their prosperity upon asset inflation—often a deliberate government policy. When apartment blocks remain empty, as they now do, can dereliction be far behind?

The third, and potentially most serious, caveat relates to the behavior of the British population. Every Friday and Saturday night (and often other nights as well), thousands of young adults invade Britain's towns and cities, intent on getting publicly drunk and making a nuisance of themselves in the name of self-expression. No one, apparently, has ever asked them not to, let alone told them; and by now, such activities as screaming at 2 AM, hair pulling, vomiting in the gutter, smashing glasses, and climbing at random into passing vehicles are seen as inalienable rights—perhaps because they have yet to be alienated. Menace is never far away.

People have sometimes accused me of exaggerating the chaos of these street scenes, to which I can reply that one American journalist who harbored such a suspicion came to investigate for himself. I took him to central Birmingham at 10 PM one Saturday night, before the fun really began; in less than five minutes, he was convinced that I had not exaggerated.

No doubt some people exist who do not mind this behavior, but few will tolerate it for long, especially as they get older. It will surely alienate the old from the young and drive them away; and if civilization requires at least some understanding and sympathy between generations, and an ability to live together, this will ultimately prevent a lasting renaissance of the cities.

Still, Rome wasn't built in a day, and it is a considerable relief that the worst of the architectural vandalism and brutalism is now behind us. It was a nightmare, but we have almost woken up.

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Letters

California in Crisis

To the editor:

Joel Kotkin's article ["The Golden State's War on Itself," Summer 2010] neglects to mention the costly public policies and lawsuit abuses pushed by construction trade unions since the 1990s. To save their dwindling market share, these unions have resorted to lobbying for complicated new "prevailing wage" laws and regulations at the state and local level and Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) at the local level. Many of the toughest obstacles to building new infrastructure in California originate with the anticompetitive political agenda of construction unions.

Kevin Dayton
Associated Builders and Contractors of California
Livermore, CA

To the editor:

The two big infrastructure projects that the author mentions as among what the "good" progressives did in the first half of the twentieth century—the L.A. Aqueduct and the Hetch Hetchy dam—were dishonest undertakings, with mixed effects at best. The aqueduct did have the eventual effect of making urban Southern California possible. But, like the Hetch Hetchy dam, it pulled considerable wool over everyone's eyes to accomplish a self-serving goal. Hetch Hetchy's promoters bamboozled the federal government into taking action that the promoters would profit from, notwithstanding that it was an apparently unnecessary dam that despoiled a priceless part of Yosemite's natural splendor.

Amy Roth
San Diego, CA

To the editor:

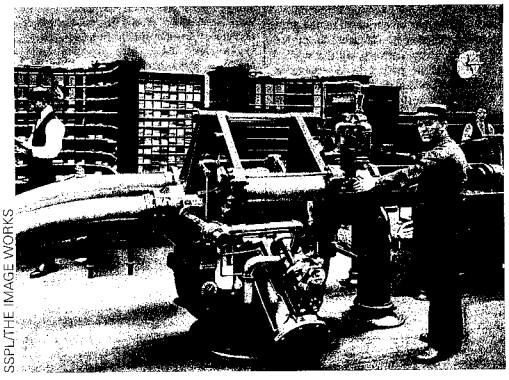
"Lavish pensions for bureaucrats"? The average pension for a public employee paid by CalPERS, the largest pension organization, is $2,188 a month. That's not lavish, kids. Destroying the middle-class residents who are public employees is not going to solve the problem but make it worse. The number of state employees in California ranks next-to-last per capita among the states. Yep, 49th out of 50 states. Public employees aren't the problem. Liberal policies are.

Scott Slotterbeck, II
Sacramento, CA

Joel Kotkin responds:

Kevin Dayton has a good point. There is a strong alliance among unions (in this case, construction unions are very much like public-sector ones), the greens, and the political bureaucracy. The entire broker state is killing California's economy, except for the elite sectors that can afford it and can do most of their construction in other parts of the country or, increasingly, other countries.

To Amy Roth I can cite the quotation attributed to Balzac: "Behind every fortune lies a crime." No doubt the people who built these projects were often unethical, but they created the possibility of mass settlement of California. William Mulholland made many mistakes, but Los Angeles as a great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city would not exist without him. The Progressives were far from perfect, but they at least believed in human progress. This is more than I can say for their contemporary namesakes.

The figures that Scott Slotterbeck cites are a bit misleading. Most public services in California are delivered at the county level, which is largely funded through the state. Pensions have been growing at a huge rate, and since they're not based on IRAs, the public is on the hook in good times and, more often, in bad times. Public employees can be a good thing, but they have allied themselves with policies that are destroying our economy and that, ironically, will lead to significant reductions in state employees and their benefits. This could occur even under their current hero, Jerry Brown, who may prove more ruthless and certainly more Machiavellian than Meg Whitman on her best (or worst) days.

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Artists:

Jock is the pseudonym of award-winning British artist Mark Simpson, best known for his comics work on DC/Vertigo's *The Losers*, the motion-picture adaptation of which opened worldwide in 2010. **Alberto Mena** is an artist and a graphic designer based in New York City. **Paul Pope** is an artist living and working in New York City. **Arnold Roth** is a cartoonist whose work has appeared in *Punch*, *The New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, and many other publications.

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Boxing with My Wife

Harry Stein

One of the first decisions that my wife and I faced after selling our longtime Westchester home was what to do with all the art done by our now-grown children back when they were in single digits. Sensibly, we decided to keep only a representative sample, and I started working through the collection, making hard choices.

That evening, I found my wife going through the garbage. "How could you get rid of *this*?" she demanded, holding up our son's rendering of an American F-14 shooting down an Iraqi plane during the Gulf War. She had a point—or would have, if there weren't ten more exactly like it. Following what the diplomats call a "frank exchange of ideas," we ended up keeping almost every finger painting and painted bit of clay, sticking it all in a couple of mammoth plastic tubs.

Thus began our long slog, marked by many skirmishes, through 26 years of accumulated stuff. What were all those dishes doing on the dining-room floor? Which was the worse millstone around our collective neck, her unbelievably vast hoard of books or my reasonably sized collection (all right, closetful) of political and historical memorabilia?

But the real battles involved stuff with emotional or psychological weight. Since we'd moved into the house in our early thirties and are now within hailing distance of Social Security, each crammed drawer and packed closet revealed more detritus of the life we've shared. Clearing out the kids' rooms brought many happy detours into reminiscence; but more than once, some rediscovered object—say, a decades-old report card—revived long-dormant quarrels over who had done what wrong.

Of course, we realized that we had no right to complain. Not only were we fortunate to sell the house in this economy; we also had temporary access to another house while plotting our next move. And since we're writers, with portable careers, the possibilities were endless. "Are you going back to the city?" we were repeatedly asked. For many of the questioners, any other possibility seemed inconceivable. But while it sounds insufferably smug to say that you've had it with New York, and boring to go on about high taxes and the nanny state, that was pretty much the truth. Some people want to wake up in a city that never sleeps; we want to wake up someplace where no one's ever heard of Paul Krugman or Sheldon Silver.

"Actually," became our stock reply, "we're looking for some adventure before we go," and, for emphasis, we named exotic locales like Vietnam, southern France, and (okay, our likeliest destination) Arizona. In fact, making that choice seemed far less vital than our real preoccupation: finding enough boxes. We came to know not only which supermarket and liquor store had what, but the precise times they broke them down for disposal.

Not that we kept everything; far from it. We donated enough books, clothes, and kitchenware to a local church to stock its entire fall rummage sale. And at our own garage sale—featuring mainly stuff we'd bought over the years at other garage sales—people kept showing up breathless, saying, "We hear they're *giving* away stuff here!" My wife was—literally—which provoked a horrified neighbor, a small-business owner, to stage an intervention, pretending to be a relative and taking over.

A week before the closing, we both finally cracked. "I'm putting this in your box," announced my wife, brandishing an eight-by-ten photo that had turned up belatedly.

"No, that box is for my work!"

"The others are sealed," she said, defiantly slipping it inside.

"Stop!" I bellowed, sending a pillow hurtling at her.

Later that night, half-asleep, I moved to cuddle beside her—and she punched me.

So now the stuff is in an extra-large public-storage space on Long Island, stacked in boxes, floor to ceiling—her books, my political stuff, all the rest—with a strong possibility that none of it will be opened until we're gone. Like President Obama, we're passing on our problems to the next generation.

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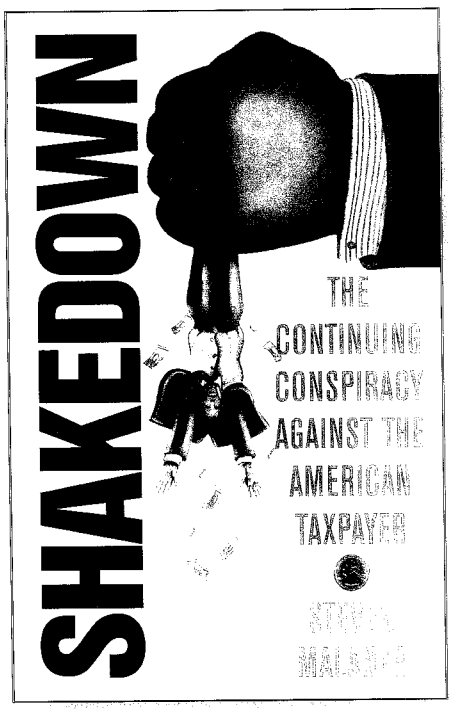

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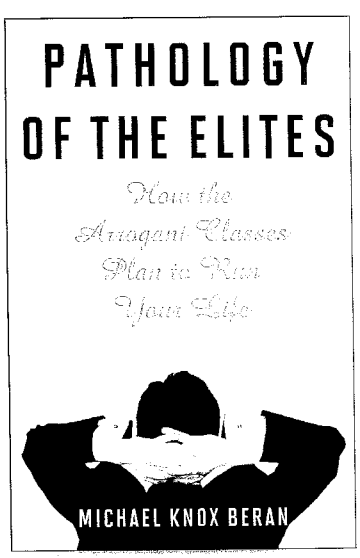

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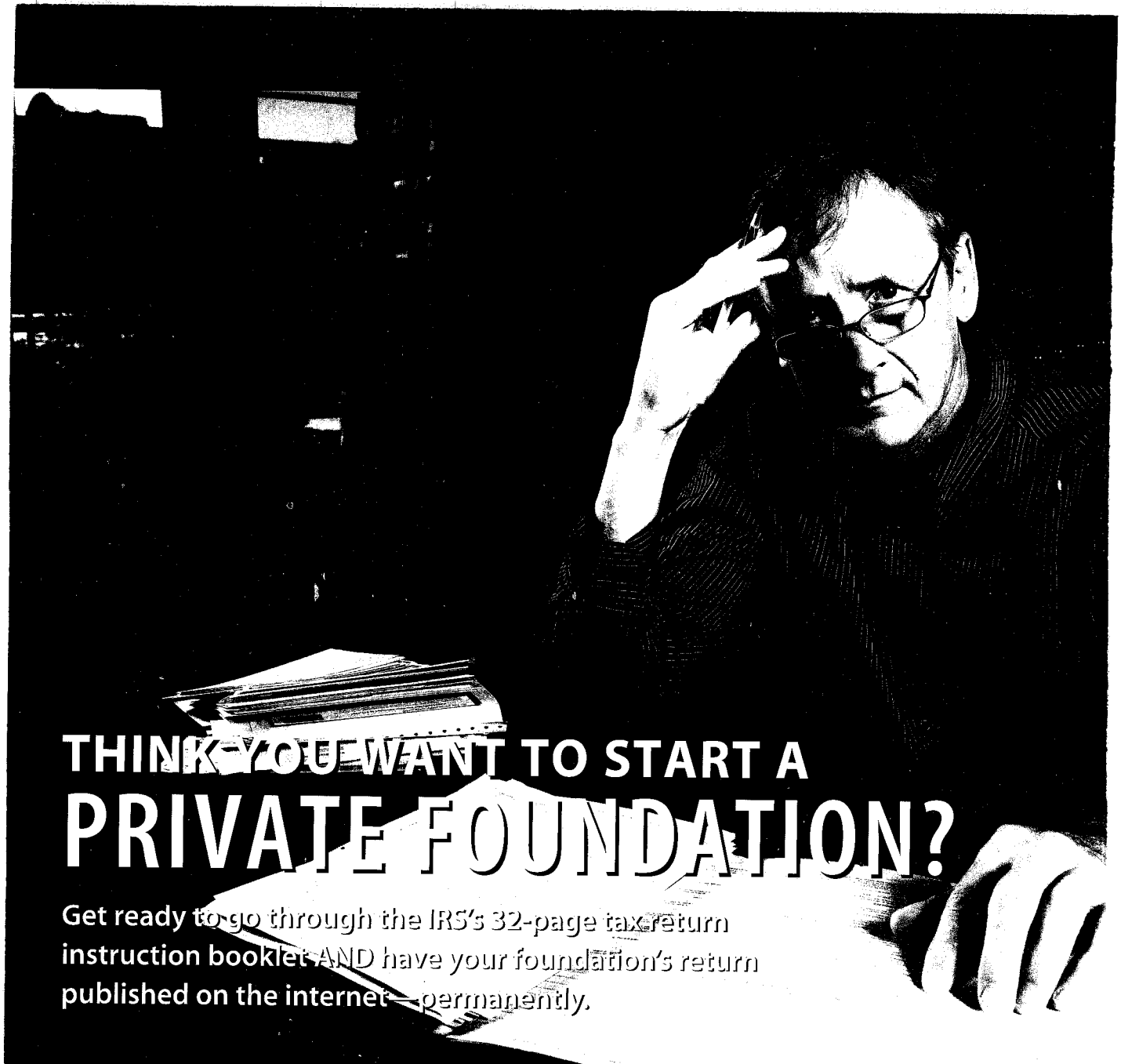

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